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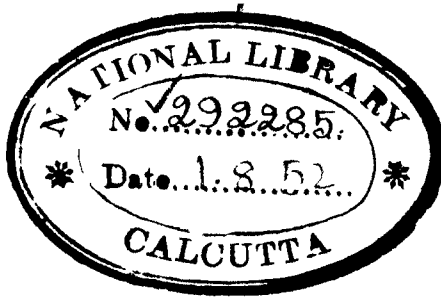
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THE POET OF HINDUSTAN

THE POET AT OXFORD
PSYCHOLOGY OF BUDDHISM
CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION
CAMBRIDGE MELODY

BY
ANTHONY ELENJIMITTAM



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FOREWORD

SIR SARVAPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN

This book by Sri Anthony Elenjimittam is important not only because it deals with the thoughts of the great Rabindranath but also because it reveals the workings of a reflective mind on the problems of religion. The author does not feel at home in any of the organised religions, though he is aware of the essential need of religion. On page 38, he urges that there are dead elements in all the living religions and what is living in them is their insistence on a personal awareness of God, effected through an inward change and purity of living. Many people in the world who are disappointed with credal religions are being drawn to a spiritual religion which cuts across racial, national and dogmatic frontiers. If the world which is increasingly becoming one in its outward aspects is to be sustained by a spiritual faith, it must realise that all religions are one in their deepest roots and highest aspirations.

Rabindranath Tagore believed in a religion which was at once spiritual and social. The Mahabharata has a significant verse which tells us that the greatest truth is that there is nothing higher than humanity.

*guhyaṁ brahma tad idam—vo bravīmī
na mānuṣāt sreṣṭhataraṁ ni kiñcit.*

A religion which is not reflected in the activities of the world is one-sided. We are expected to live and work for the good of the world and for the glory of God.

Jagad hitāya kṛṣṇāya

The author of this book subscribes to a similar view. I hope the book will find readers among the followers of the different religions.

S. Radhakrishnan.

New Delhi
19/4/48

DEDICATION

Gone you are, my Rabindranath, ere I returned to India after discovering my national soul. My mortal eyes have not communed with your calm and gracious eyes ; but my heart has beaten in unison with yours through your songs and verses, through your creative productions in Literature, Art, Philosophy and Religion. You being the nearest kin to my spirit within, I came and settled down in your Bengal, now become mine, this France of the Indian sub-continent. Here one breathes the congenial air for creative enterprise, poetic thrill and ever-growing catholicity, perhaps more than in any other province of this adored Motherland of our birth and love.

From the silent ashes you have risen and often whispered into my heart the eternal message of India, about the significance of your lyrics and rhymes, of your eternal Santiniketan. Hence, pardon me, I venture to put my songs into your mouth. Let your dream of World-Culture be realized ; let India become your Santiniketan ; let this world be your Viswa-Bharati. To the dreamers of this World-Unity Ideal, whether they are in India or abroad ; at Santiniketan or elsewhere, are the following pages dedicated with much love, with yearnings and hopes for the happy wedding of the East with the West, of the West with the East.

NOTE

The late Dr. Wm. H. Drummond, a prominent English Unitarian, a great personal friend of Rabindranath, a lover of Indian wisdom and a sincere bridge-builder between the East and the West, used to tell the present writer many episodes illustrating the profound humanity, catholicity and creativity of the Poet of Hindustan. Dr. Drummond and I used to spend many evenings of the Spring and Summer months of the year 1943 together, discussing and discoursing on the nature and destiny of man on earth, on the historical and mystical side of human life, on the spirit of Eastern and Western civilizations, on many a religious, cultural, philosophical and economico-political problem of the day. That great friend of mine is not with us today ; but I know his spirit hovers around me as I create a book out of the anecdotes and stories he narrated to me during my happy and fruitful sojourn at Oxford.

The letter killeth, but the spirit vivifieth. Leaving aside all the historical and critical data, I may flatter myself when I believe and proclaim that I have understood the spirit of Rabindranath. Of course, the individual traits and differences are there. But I love to think that the reader will find a continuity of spirit between the seraphic canticles of the Poet and the present volume.

Thanks are due to Sri Kedarnath Chatterjee, the Editor of The Modern Review, for lending me the blocks for this book.

256, Vivekananda Road
Calcutta
18th Feb. 1948

A. E.



Rabindranath Tagore
1 Baisakh 1335

THE POET OF HINDUSTAN

CHAPTER I

THE POET IN OXFORD

AT DR. DRUMMOND'S

It was in the month of May 1930 that Rabindranath had one of his most glorious triumphs in Europe. For many years the Hibbert Trustees had longed to see the Poet delivering the world-famous Hibbert Lectures. The year 1928 was fixed for the Poet to enlighten the world public on matters relating to philosophy and religion. But, due to ill-health, the Poet could not proceed to Europe, and his lectures had to be postponed till the year 1930. The publication of those lectures in one volume entitled, "THE RELIGION OF MAN", can be compared to his SADHANA, in profundity of thought, in breadth of vision, and in prophetic genius. The whole series of lectures, from beginning to end, is a masterpiece of prophetic and poetic insight, not a display of academic pedantry, nor a parade of oriental pageantry.

The host and hostess of Rabindranath during his sojourn in Oxford, while delivering the Hibbert Lectures in the Unitarian Theological College, Manchester College, Oxford, were Dr. William Hamilton Drummond and Mrs. Drummond. The Drummonds were sincere admirers of India, because they understood and loved the spiritual heritage of India, represented by the prophets of modern India, men like Ram Mohun Roy, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Dr. Drummond had a nice garden house at 15, Rawlinson Road, Oxford, where his distinguished guest was staying in those days.

Just in front of the large drawing-room, there lay one of those typical nice English gardens, charming to look at, and an inspiration for both the Drummonds and for their guests and visitors. There, at times, the Poet used to sit on an arm-chair, absorbed in thought, admiring the flower-garden, the grassy carpet with

which God had covered the virgin beauty of that garden and also of the British isles.

The Poet used to get up early at 4 A. M. to meditate. One morning, Rabindranath, after his usual silence, prayer and meditation, walked into the garden, and sat on the arm-chair. The city of Oxford was then buried in silent quietude, in the stillness of a peaceful slumber. Buses and cars had not begun to ply in the streets. The colleges were taxed to the maximum that year. At that time the student-world also was asleep, absorbed into the ocean of the Unconscious. The term was to be over towards the middle of June. In that silence and sleep of Oxford City, the great centre of learning, Rabindranath was wide awake in spirit, tapping at the heart of the Cosmic Consciousness, enjoying the dance of Creation, as he then felt, sensed and realised it.

The Poet sat there for hours, fully absorbed in thought. The birds began to chirp and sing. Mrs. Drummond was anxiously waiting for the Poet to rise from his meditation, and go to take his breakfast. But the Poet was still immersed in the conscious communion with the Life of the Universe.

As the clock struck eight, Rabindranath slowly opened his eyes, when the anxiously awaiting hostess approached him and said : Good morning, Dr. Tagore. You have had a very long meditation this morning. Had'nt you ?

Rabindranath : Yes, the Mother Nature held me close in her lap, and I was resting in her fond embrace for so long. In fact, the interval between my coming here and your calling me, I did not spend in this world, but in the fond lap of Sat-Chit-Ananda. Time and space a man transcends when he falls into a swoon, resting in the bosom of Eternity. Yes, I had a very soothing and illuminating meditation this morning.

Then they went together to the table and had the breakfast.

After the breakfast, the Poet went upstairs, to the rich library which Dr. Drummond had collected. As the Poet was looking around the wonderful collection of books, which Dr. Drummond had inherited from James Drummond, his father, Mrs. Drummond went upstairs to inform that two students from Balliol College were waiting downstairs to see the Poet. Rabindranath came down and Mrs. Drummond introduced him to the students,

The students had come to request him to be kind enough to address the post-graduate students of the University.

Rabindranath, then, asked them : What do you want me to speak about ? Tomorrow I will address the Hibbert audience on the "Four Stages of Life", which will bring me to the end of this series of lectures. Afterwards, I am at your service.

Mr. Nelson, one of the two : I leave it entirely to you. But as far as I could focus the minds of the students, I feel, they would like you to speak on some subject pertaining to religious philosophy. All of us have been listening to your lectures from the Hibbert Chair with increasing admiration. Yesterday we listened to your address in the Manchester College chapel, which you kindly delivered during the religious service. The more we hear you, the more we long to hear you. Anything you are pleased to speak to us is always welcome.

Rabindranath : Tell me something more specific ; because I would like to respond as closely as I can to the call of your hearts, and address you on a subject you all are agreed upon.

Mr. John Whitehead, the other student from Balliol, then came forward and said : Dr. Tagore, listen. I shall be very frank. Of late, in this University circle, much interest has been aroused by the discoveries of modern psychology. Many students and savants of comparative religion and philosophy have unearthed very many interesting and noble truths. We all know that the most humanistic, naturalistic and psychological of all religions in history is Buddhism, the only Indian religion that has gone beyond her frontiers, and thrives, even to this day, beyond the land of its birth. I can guarantee that the greater number of the select audience would be glad to hear from you something on Buddhism. I make bold to make one suggestion, however. As most of the students are scientifically trained, and rather academic in outlook, we shall be grateful if you could attune your address to such an audience.

Rabindranath : But, my young friends, I am not a scholar. (Smilingly) You should come here daily, and give me lessons as to how I should address a scholarly audience. You know, I am not at all academic-minded nor scholarly. I am just a singer, a dreamer, a "visionary", as some of my own countrymen call me.

Nelson : You can never be a visionary. You are, and shall remain, the universal man of the twentieth century. In you, eastern mysticism and western dynamism find an equilibrium ; in you we find a bridge between the Eastern philosophy and Western culture.

Whitehead : We know you are scholarly enough. It is characteristic of real greatness to be humble. That is why the two greatest Indians of today, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, pose themselves as ordinary men, although divine splendour shines through their words and life. Gandhiji once described himself as a "farmer and a weaver", as now you are calling yourself "merely a singer and a visionary".

Rabindranath : Do you want me, then, to descend from my celestial heights, and become prosaic, just to address a group of scholars ? Then your will be done ! So if I become too prosaic, academic and pedantic, then you will be at fault ; because I am going to set aside my lyre and harp, just to dance to your tunes, to comply with your hearts' desire. •

Then they fixed up the date for the lecture and, as they were leaving, Rabindranath humorously repeated once again, with an ironical smile : Do not forget to come and teach me how to address a scholarly audience.

THY GLORIOUS SUN

After the students had left, Rabindranath, looking at the gloriously shining sun, sang :

With folded hands and bended knees I fall in ecstasy rapt,
At the music of thy Creation, my Lord and Love. I die athirst
Of thy glorious vision, thy fondest embrace, held in thy arms,
In the lap of thy Creation, amidst thy sun, moon and stars.
Infinite is the world within ; thy living voice I hear so clear ;
Now my dead limbs are awake, as I see these skies so serene,
Thy glorious sun shining so bright as in Hindustan skies,
Where the vedas have called it "the eye of God". Descend, ye nymphs,
Ye constellations, gentle breeze and cyclonic monsoon rains ;
Lightning and thunder, children and flowers, come before my eyes.
The portals of my heart are open ; the way to immortality I've seen ;
What else do I desire on earth below but thee, the sun of my soul ?

India, land of my birth and love, if divided you are today,
 The day of your reunion should not be far away, for you are one,
 As your Sat-Chit-Ananda is but one, one without a second.
 League and the Congress should re-embrace, and heal the wound.
 Equally on Hindus and Moslems this sun shines. This air caresses
 All children born of this ancient land. Why then dissensions ?
 Heavenly Father over the just and unjust does let his sun shine,
 Rains over the good and bad. Why don't you, then,
from hatred cease ?

O sun-god, let your rays bring me back life, cheer and light,
 Make me launch into the Great Unknown, into this vast Universe.
 Hold me in your lap, make me fearless, as I reach nearer thee.
 O sun, moon and stars, transplant me where there is light and life !
 Infinity have I beheld. O infinity I thirst for. I want to be All.
 How can I then be imprisoned, my God, within national walls ?
 Let my body return to the earth whence it came ; but let
consciousness,
 This divine spark in me, glow, grow, expand unto Infinity, unto
eternal Life !

I sense the prison of finitude in everything I behold,
 In everything underneath the sun. So, row me on, beyond
the sun moon and stars, my God.
 Amassing money, winning fame and enjoying pleasures,
all fade away,
 As I glimpse into thy Permanent, Living, Dynamic Reality.

MAKE ME AN INDIAN FIRST AND THEN A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

One day, looking at a large map of the world in Dr. Drummond's library, the Poet sang :

From the core of India's national soul, let my heart expand and grow,
 Enfold and embrace the East and the West, in ever-growing Love.
 Let my garden of nationalism bear the seeds of internationalism,
 And let me be first a citizen of India, the land of my birth and love,
 Ere I become, and am hailed, a citizen of this world.
 Italy, the land of Art and Beauty, a foster-mother you are to me.
 Those years of study and discipline, breathing in your sacred hills,
My terra Italica, engraved you are in my heart, in indelible letters.

DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

Keshab Chandra Sen had presented an inscribed plate, painted in blue and copper lustre, to Dr. Drummond's father. When Dr. Drummond showed it to the Poet and spoke about the trials and death of Keshab, the Poet sang :

There's no death for knowers of Truth, for Truth is immortality.

Isam twam jnatwāh amṛta bhavanti--

Immortal become those who know the Lord.

This the Vedas proclaim ; this Christian theologians preach ;

This every religion says, all creeds on this earth teach.

My heart now leaps with the joy of the Lord,

Whose mercy and forgiveness have guaranteed my life.

With thy helping hands I shall keep off from sinful paths,

No more shall I return, my God, into the pits of mortality.

Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see the distant scene,

one step is enough for me.

I dance and sing in the Lord, whether I live or die I do not care.

Now that the last moorings of this cargo boat are broken,

And I see before me the infinite expanse of the skies,

the infinite ocean of Life and Love.

Let my hands write quickly ; let my lips sing loudly,

Let my heart continue to throb in blissful love,

And dwell in imperturbable peace and onward move.

Let me not keep this treasure to me alone, for freely have

I received it.

Let me give it free to all Mankind. I am nothing but a reed ;

A bugle through which the unseen Lord speaks and sings.

Let me be thy bondslave for all time and all eternity.

Infinite is the song that rises within my heart today,

O boundless vision I see around me, in God's lap I fall and rest :

I am rapt, far beyond the clouds and skies, and am cheered :

No shackles are left. Let me stay on here where Freedom reigns.

Life and death are nothing ; God's poetry is heard

In my heart, springing most naturally, without the slightest effort :

And I tune and sing them in melodious music, which one can

experience, but never express.

Reach you, my dear soul, those heavenly vaults,

Where freedom dawns, where life reigns in superabundance.

Go, go, my soul, go far beyond the bondage of life and death ;
 Soar, my soul, soar beyond the grave and every froth ;
 Fly far beyond those blue skies and twinkling stars,
 Reach, my soul, reach that Yonder Shore of Existence.
 God's Creation is this Universe, His sport, His *leela*.
 When man wakes up in his consciousness, full and infinite,
 Then Creation vanishes, his sports and *leela* too.
 Why this maid smiles just to capture the man ?
 Why this man frowns just to capture her heart ?
 They both meet and mate, and is another *leela* born,
 Whose salvation, again, is to be sought in fully awakened
 consciousness.

Namo tassa bhagavato arhato samma sambuddassa—
 Here I see the Indian soul in its full-fledged rhythm.
 Now I glimpse into the Upanishadic ocean of Life.
Neti is no longer for me ; *tatvamasi* truth has crowned my strife.
 India's soul has never denied, but affirmed life. Immortality,
 The canticle of eternal freedom she has tolled,
 From the remotest past unto this atomic age,
 Through her hills, mountains and planes, at every stage.
 The nightingale has sung, and your harpsichord is wide awake :
 Silken, scented handkerchief descends from above to wipe your tears.
 Alone you'll never march, my soul, but with a perpetual comrade
 You'll pass through vales and dales, through moor and den,
 unto the Great Unknown.

Let not your heart rejoice but in Truth and God's Love,
 Whence never-failing, inextinguishable fountains of grace spring ;
 There you redeem yourself, your heart, soul and mind,
 For all time, for all eternity.
 Birth is born of sexual love ; but deathless birth
 Is won by right consciousness, by full-grown personality.
 In developed consciousness is life and immortality,
 There lies the reign of eternal bliss and tranquillity.

INDIA, MY GODDESS, I ADORE YOU

One day, after the Poet had finished reading a page from Annie Besant's English translation of the Bhagavad Gita, he sang :

At thy feet I prostrate to say : India, my goddess I adore you,
With you I worship Nature, this Universal Mother in whose
lap we are all born.

With loving adoration I fall on my knees in ecstasy rapt,
To hear thy wisdom ; those immortal words of the Upanishads.
All that your sages have sung, ages ago, back to my mind return,
At whose trumpet call I am silenced, I fall in a beatific swoon.
With you I find the keys of the Kingdom ; I knock at your door ;
I see the shoreless Ocean of Immortal Life opened unto me.
This song Thou hast called me to sing, to all nations to proclaim,
That India's soul we need discover so that humanity itself
may be rediscovered.

India, who has taught me to seek and find human truths
everywhere under God's star-lit skies,
And inspired to grow my wings, to soar, and soar beyond the
limitations of time-space-bound bliss,
Hold me now in this lonely pilgrimage of mine,
when fearlessly have I plunged into the Great Unkown.
Cheer me by your love, vision and humanist idealism,
and guide me on to the land and skies still unknown.
Make my love fruitful in service ; let your love destroy the
roots of lust in me ;
Destroy, uproot, those noxious weeds of mind-clouding passions.
Let the core of thy religious message hold me strong,
tied to the rock of spirituality,
And enable me to stand erect on the side of values, thought,
Soul-culture and Self-realisation.
My India, my adored Mother, and my fondest Love, teach me
how to keep my soul unsullied, my heart untainted,
Amidst these enticing raptures and alluring baits, from
the bonds of *Maya-devi*, whose captives we remain ;
Until those saving rays descend from above, gladden
our hearts, and steer our barges, straight and right.

Your myths and "pagan" rites, your gods and goddesses,
 your legends and folklore, your epics and love,
 My India, I accept, I adore, because your message emancipated me
 from sectarianism, narrow nationalism and credal bondage.
 India, my Mother, who gave me life ; India, my Darling, who
 gave me love,

India, my goddess, I fall prostrate and adore you.

Of all the gardens most divine are you, India, *Hindustan hamara*,
One in many, rich in variety, varied in colours, costumes, creeds.
Mother, Goddess, Love, my Life, my All, you are, *terra indica*,
I fall back in ecsatic love in your arms, in your fond embrace.

India, where flourished Metaphysics, Religion and Philosophy,
Which, like the Himalayan summits, veil their snow-white virginity,
Far above the roving clouds and blue, serene, tropical skies.

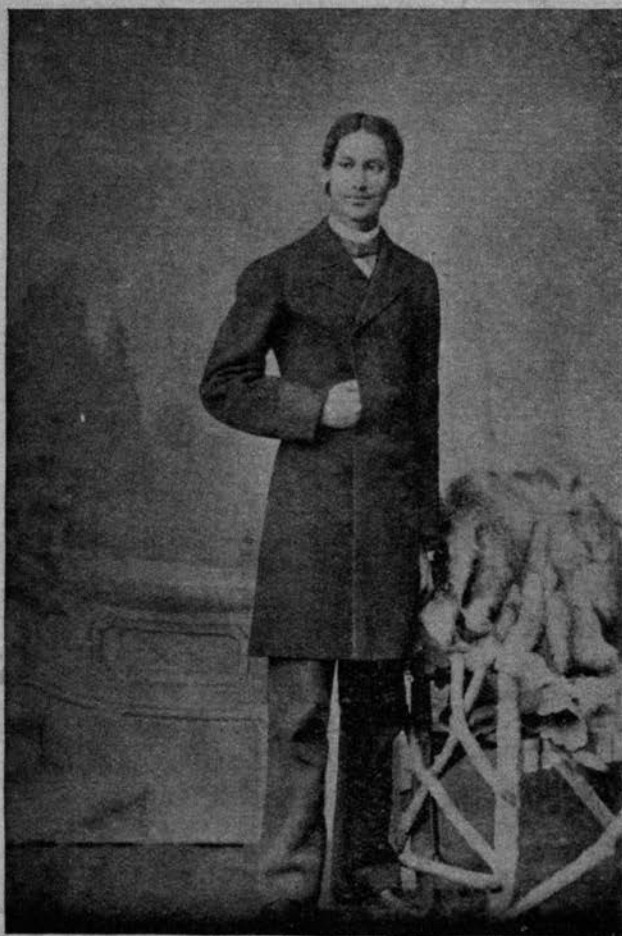
India, where still runs in royal veins that creative Aryan blood,
Where my own tiny barge is safely anchored in gales and trials,
Come, descend from your celestial heights my heart and mind to
mould.

Let me grow, expand, on my national genius, on my Indianism ;
O let all do likewise ; a French rooted in that proud French soil,
An Italian on the traditions of ancient Rome and Hellenism,
The Anglo-Saxons, Russians, Germans and the Japs unveil,
Grow on their national roots, and meet on the Universal Man,
Who reigus, as on the natural throne, under the Hindustan skies.
Through *Brahmavidya* and *Brahmacharya* let me be freed from
samsarik wheels,

Realising your symbol, th'eternal OM, Reality, Truth, Bliss,
The converging point of all messages which prophets gave,
Saints and seers both in East and West, at all times, in all climes.
Let on this unshaken rock of Vedanta, on this *philosophia perennis*,
Be raised Science and modern Industry in India's independent
days.

Grow, my India, grow ; expand, embrace, enfold in *Advaitam*,
Oneness,
Under the sunshine of Universal Humanity, of one God and one
World.
India, my goddess, I fall prostrate and adore you.





Rabindranath in England in his youth

CHAPTER II

PSYCHOLOGY OF BUDDHISM

Two days after the Hibbert Lectures were over, Rabindranath appeared to address the students on Buddhism, as previously arranged. As usual, with wonderful calm and confidence, the Poet mounted the raised platform, in the midst of cheers and applause from an enthusiastic and most select audience

Resting his left hand on the table, the Poet began :

Let me, first of all, plead guilty before this learned and select audience for having come here with a poet's religion and philosophy. I am told that the audience here is very scholarly and academic. I have spent some time reflecting as to how I should appear before you. I am not a scholar nor an academician, as you might have already noticed. I am just a singer, a poet, and my religion and philosophy cannot be other than that of a poet, of a singer. Yet, I should pray that the Mother Nature and Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, inspire me to meet a scholarly audience on the same plane. For the time being, I am setting aside my lyre and flute, and am going to plunge myself and you, into that realm known as scholarship and creative learning, which, I feel, is the need of the present hour.

As Arthur Schopenhauer has said : "Christianity has this peculiar disadvantage, that, unlike other religions, it is not a pure system of doctrine : its chief and essential feature is that it is a history, a series of events, a collection of facts, a statement of the actions and sufferings of the individuals : it is this history which constitutes dogma, and belief in its salvation. Other religions (chiefly Aryan), Buddhism, for instance, have, it is true, historical appendages, the life, namely, of their founders. This, however, is not part and parcel of the dogma, but it is taken along with it. For example, the *Lalitavistara* may be compared with the Gospel so far as it contains the life of *Sakyamuni*, the Buddha of the present period of the world's history : but this is something which is quite separate and different from the dogma, from the system itself : and for this reason, the lives of former Buddhas were quite other, and those of the future will be quite other than the life of the Buddha

of to-day. The dogma is by no means one with the career of its founder ; it does not rest on individual persons or events ; it is something universal and equally valid at all times. The *Lalitavistara* *is not, then, a gospel in the Christian sense of the word ; it is not the joyful message of an act of redemption, it is the career of him who has shown how each one may redeem himself. The historical constitution of Christianity makes the Chinese laugh at missionaries as story-tellers".*

Our spiritual life consists in periods of insight through which we heighten and continuously broaden our vision through the awakening of all the deep-lying powers of our soul, mind, emotions, will-power and of all the faculties of our being, with a growing sense of stronger convictions, through the dynamic integration of our personality, not by annihilating or destroying it, but by expanding and enlarging it, so as to become the all-comprehending Whole with the entire universe outside us, which is one with the deepest Self within.

Everywhere religion has accepted its body of teaching from the long past behind ; but what is striking in the history of many religions is the initial spiritual earnestness and moral stress, which was the motive force all throughout its influence in the life of men who live by, and not only profess, that religion. Everything in this world has a beginning, development, gradual decay and final death. This progressive evolution and decay is the very physical law underlying the whole of Creation. It is at the time of decadence and death of a given historical religion that the world-realising elements supersede the Self-realising forces, and superstitions and crystallized dogmatism displace that inner worship, that kingdom of God within, that all-unifying and undefinable something within our hearts, that abyss of mind, that synthesis of all varied consciousness, that indestructible and inalienable soul-centre, that divine spark within, that inner light and life, the very sum total and substance, the seed, root and flower of all great religious experiences in the life of men. Sacerdotalism supersedes prophetism ; dogmatism overshadows the living, ever-young and ever-fresh experience of God-touch and ousts God-vision and God-realisation within us.

All great religions are like different waves, which gradually

* Schopenhauer, *Essays*, "*The Christian system*".

rise, reach the climax, and fall again, not to die out, but to rise again as other waves, but of the same substance, of the same essence as the ocean of Life. Wave, if wave, must be of that same water which forms the whole sea. Religion, if religion, must be of that life, which is one with the Life of the Whole, and realisation of that Whole is the goal of religion. If this central fact and essential truth do not enter into religion, it becomes a sham, a counterfeited religion, not real religion at all. The sea and the waves you see in the cinema, although they seem to be waves on the sea, they are not really neither the one nor the other, but a false imitation, a shadowy play of the real sea and of the waves that are living realities outside the film. But even the seas or waves you see with your external eyes all around the shores of England, are not really such as they appear to us, when the spiritual eyes are opened, and we gaze face to face the majesty and all-in-allness of the Universal Man who lives within the hearts of men.

HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM COMPARED

Hinduism is not a book-bound religion, nor a prophet-centering creed. But it has its books, it has its prophets who have bequeathed to us the most varied treasures about God-touch at various levels of religious experience. If popular Hinduism, with its caste system and priesthood, its ritualism and idol worship, its inspired books and God-incarnations, has become limited and nationalised in its scope and vision, there is her daughter, blood of her blood, Buddhism, which, insisting upon the essentials of the Religion of Man, has spread beyond the frontiers of India, and has gone Eastwards, always having the potential vitality to spread all over the world, as the universal Psychological religion of Humanity.

Hinduism sought after emancipation or *mukti* by realising the Infinite; Buddhism aimed at the same goal starting from the tangible realities of life. Hinduism aims at something positive, emancipation, or freedom from the trammels of the finite, and the union with the Boundless; Buddhism aims at something negative, *Nirvana* or extinction. But, in the last resort, Nirvana is not a negative ideal, for, the Buddhist nothingness or *sunyata* is a state transcending both the positive and the negative, and yet comprehending both. We have an analogy of this concept in Taoism. Tao is

higher than God Himself, for both God, men and the Universe, the whole and the part, proceeded from it. Tao is the background of both the Infinite Godhead and the finite creation. The Gnostic School and various forms of neo-Platonism, some Arabian philosophers, especially Avicenna, taught that from that ineffable "not this, not that", sprang both God, men and the entire Creation.

"Brahma-vidya, the cult of Brahma, the infinite Being, has for its object *mukti*, emancipation ; while Buddhism has *nirvana*, extinction. It may be argued that both have the same ideas in different names. But names represent attitudes of minds and emphasize particular aspects of truth. Mukti draws our attention to the positive, and Nirvana to the negative side of truth. Buddha kept silent through his teachings about the truth of the OM, the Everlasting Yes, his implication being that by the negative path of destroying the self, we naturally reach that truth. Therefore he emphasized the fact of *dukha*, misery, which had to be avoided. But Brahma-vidya emphasised the fact of *ananda*, joy, which had to be attained. The latter cult also needs for its fulfilment the discipline of self-abnegation ; yet it holds before its view the idea of Brahma, not only at the end, but all through the process of realisation."*

Our tiny self obstructs our way towards comprehending and embracing All, for which there is an innate thirst in us. It is for this reason that all religions have unequivocally proclaimed : "Unless you deny yourself and take up your cross everyday, you cannot be my disciple."† Unless you lose yourself in the whole you cannot find your life. Unless the seed falls to the ground and is dead, there is no hope for a new plant, a new life, and a new everything, springing forth from it. Without self-denial there is no Self-realisation ; for the goal of religion is the displacement of the empirical, limited self, filling the vacuum with the Real Infinite Self that is within man, and outside him. That is religion ; that is God-realisation.

We are immersed in the life of God ; but unless we are aroused by the fire of religion, there is no hope of realising our real Self, consequential to our divine birth-right. God is within us, and we are within God ; the universe contains God, and the universe is contained within Him. He is All, He is Whole. Our real bliss and fulfil-

* Rabindranath Tagore (*Letters to a Friend*. P. 130).

† Jesus, *Mare*, VIII. 34 & *Luke*, XIV. 27.

ment consist in being and becoming one with Him. "Accordingly you see how all things are in universe, and the universe is in all things ; we in it, it in us, and thus all issues in a complete unity..... ...God is whole in all, and whole in every part, so that we speak of parts in the infinite, not of parts of the infinite," says Giordano Bruno.*

It is a vision of the Real that we desire and strive to achieve, through the medium of religion. It is not of so great importance whether we call that Supreme Reality God, Father, Allah, Brahman, or by any other name. In the Semitic theism, or in most other theistic forms of religion, it is called God, a transcendent God, who, out of nothing, produced the visible and invisible creation. In the monistic view, in that all-unifying and all-embracing philosophy of life, God is equated with the universe, and the universe with God. Personality is transcended, not denied ; impersonality is affirmed, not dogmatised ; all-in-allness is realised, not imposed. In a theistic system, God creates the universe, out of nothing, and the latter has no existence independently of God ! But in higher synthesis of pantheistic idealism "God creates the universe by transforming Himself into the universe. The latter confessedly has become God ; since it is real and also infinite, there is no room for God independently of the universe, but only within it. The terms God and universe become synonymous, and the idea of God is retained in order not to break with tradition".†

There are as many aspects of that one only Reality as there are angles of vision through which it is seen, as many eyes as there are ways of looking, or trying to look, at it. God is this entire universe ; but nothing of this universe is God. Universe is both God and the universe. God is both God and the universe. The equation between God and the universe is valid only in deeper layers of human consciousness, and in the deepest uncreated touch of God, when that uncreated spark shines in the heart of man. Are there not some passing moments and fleeting hours, when our real self sinks deep and deeper into that bed-rock of truth and light, the junction and uniting link between the infinite God, and the finite

* *Della cause. Dialogo V—.*

† P. Deussen, (*Philosophy of the Upanishads. P. 106*).

man ; where the distinction between the finite and the infinite is fully transcended, where personality and impersonality are surpassed, and our soul, our uncreated centre, our divine spark within, feels and realises its normal state, its undisturbed equilibrium, its undisputed eternity and divinity in the bosom of All, God ?

“ And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.”*

There is no religion outside the ken of personal experience of the Impersonal All ; of the impersonal touch of the Personal Whole. That is God-realising religion.

In Indian thought we speak of God manifest and God unmanifest, (*Avyakta*) ; God in His manifesting or evolving aspect is the creation ; in His unmanifested form is the Absolute of philosophy and God of religion. Not only with Indian thought ; but also in the history of European thought, those giant thinkers who sank deeper into the mystery of life, realised this great truth and have given expression to this fundamental unity of all, in the unitary conception of the universe. God unfolded is Creation ; Creation unfolded is God, and it is through the wand of religion that we get behind the veil of the manifested God, or Creation, and reach the unmanifested Creation or God. “The one highest Being in whom capacity and reality are unseparated, which in an absolute way can be all and is all that it can be, is as not unfolded a single, immeasurable, endless, which embraces all being, as unfolded on the contrary, it in the sensibly perceived body”—says again G. Bruno,† Goethe said : “Matter cannot exist and be operative without Spirit, nor Spirit without matter.” Perhaps Spirit could not exist without matter. I can quote great thinkers of the west, to show that not only the “morbid Indian mysticism” but also the

* Wordsworth (*Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey*).

† *Dialog V.*

healthier minds in the West, almost unanimously have thought, more or less, on the same monistic lines.

As to our external senses the existence of the external world is evident, a blue sky-vault above, with the rising and setting of the sun, the flatness of the earth's surface, and so on, so, for a psychological man his finiteness and consequent misery is evident. Now it is the function of religion to foster his innate thirst after infinity and the consequent real and lasting happiness. There is misery in life, and freeing oneself of all his miseries means attaining his aim in life. Men are miserable, but Man is freed from all misery, because he is potentially infinite, i. e., unbounded from every side. To be bound is limitation, and boundlessness or infinity is freedom. Freedom of the spirit, in the highest possible degree, is emancipation or Self-realisation. Even when we go headlong into the pathway of death and spiritual ruin, of sensual pleasures and soft living, there is clearly heard a voice that admonishes us to turn into ourselves, to make amends for our wrongs, and to set forth along the right way, to straighten our crookedness, and to achieve and fully realise our ultimate goal in life, common and identical for you and for me, for me and for all, now and for ever.

IMPERMANENCY

A sense of impermanency of everything under the sun, it seems to me very clear, is the starting point of all the auto-redemptive process in man. Salvation or Self-realisation is not to be attained by the grace of God, by the intercession of the saints, by the ministry of priests and parsons, but by oneself, by one's own personal efforts, and by one's own earnestness and self-awakening. Man starts off his course in life, as the animals do, with many wants, and seeing but the immediate present or the immediate future. But there is Man, immanent in the hearts of men, and hence he is restless and is in constant struggle, uncertainty and trouble, till, at last, the awakening of Man within him makes him see his limitations, his miseries, and shows him the way he should pursue to arrive at the desired end. One does not cross the river by merely shouting from one bank to the other side: 'bank come here': but he should take a boat and row on, till he reaches the other bank. From this beautiful parable of Buddha we have our own personal experience corroborated that, not by invoking the assistance of

saints and gods that we get ourselves freed from fetters that bind our souls and hearts captives and slaves under the bondage of sin and death ; but by our own personal efforts, striving to free ourselves, and extricate ourselves from the trammels and trials of limitations and creation-wide misery. Freedom from misery automatically leads a man to bliss, as freeing and cleansing one's heart automatically leads him to the positive side of life, to the purity of heart and the consequent vision of God or Reality.

Our forefathers, thousands of years ago, had seen and trembled at Death, this monster that devours all the born beings of the earth. We may advance in science, in culture, or in whatever field we like ; but as long as the mystery of birth and death lasts, the fundamental teachings of the God-realising aspects whether it is in Buddhism or in Christianity, in Hinduism or in Islam, in Judaism or in Zoroastrianism, will remain the same. Arrows of untold pain, waves of emotion and commiseration, creep into my heart when I look at the sweet faces of thousands of children, smiling and playing, enriching and gladdening this earth of ours, slowly marching towards the funeral pyre or burial ground, without even in the least being instructed about the mysteries of life and death, without even thinking, in the least, of the possible or probable future that awaits them beyond the valley of Death. I know, I will have to leave behind all that I now claim to be as mine,—nay—my own body, to be dissolved into the bosom of the Mother Earth. Then what will become of my dear ones on the earth when I pass to the life beyond ? However great may be our love for our beloved, however intimate and Platonic may our love be for our sweethearts and darlings, we know that we are solitary voyagers on this life's solemn main, where the stewardship and pilotage of the tiny boats are wholly committed to our care, to our direction. If we sink and are shipwrecked, the fault is ours, not of anybody else ; if we steer right and reach the harbour, to the shore beyond, then, the whole merit is ours, not of our empirical selves, but of the Real One, who lives in, and loves, all of us.

The sense of impermanency and transitoriness in everything gives us that necessary tonic in life, that sad, calm, ever-serious melancholy of life. Optimism unmixed with this salutary dose of melancholy, is necessarily sectarian, unbalancedly dynamic, and uncritically irreligious. Foolishness is often co-existent with

laughter ; but tears with wisdom. Tears lead us to the more profound and deeper realities of life ; laughter, most often, leaves us on the surface of the ocean of life. In the West there is more laughter and there are fewer tears, and hence superficiality of life is conspicuously marked here. In the East, we have many occasions to court with misery, with want, and, above all, with the pangs of thought, that we have more tears than laughter, and hence oriental wisdom outweighs the superficiality of life, symbolized by laughter.

Everything passes on ; and the seal of "pass on, pass on" is deeply imprinted in God's Creation. The goddess of pleasure, the goddess of mammon, the goddess of ambition, comes from different shrines, and we are encircled by the charm and fascination of these death-bearing mothers. Then the voice of wisdom is lost, the primordial thirst after the Infinite is forgotten, and we roll on, and sink deep into the filthy and foamy surface of life. The vision of the Infinite being eclipsed from the eyes of our hearts, the misery of finiteness takes hold of us, woos our hearts, lulls our spirit, and the majesty and divinity of the inner Man is eclipsed for the moment. But this does not happen unless there is an infinite vacuum left within us, which clamours and cries aloud for its filling-up. But only the filling-up with the Infinite Man can satisfy us, can restore that lost equilibrium and the divinity which are our birth-rights.

A serious and thinking man must experience, sooner or later, this spiritual awakening and the consequent illumination. All are called to be spiritually awakened and interiorly illumined, and thus to become as many Buddhas as there are truly religious souls. As Christians ought to be as many *alter Christus*, so all Buddhists are called upon to be as many *alter Buddha*. Now Buddha and Christ agree so far as the God-realising factors are concerned ; for self-knowledge, self-control, prayer, and other *sine qua non* conditions of God-realising religions are the *élan vital* of their religion. Buddha was not a monk or a *sacerdotalisophile*, although commonplace men came and construed sacerdotalism and organised religion around him and in his name. The same fad happened with Christ and his religion. Christ was divine, although the Christ of the dogmas which the Church teaches is none but a mythical person with ecclesiastical metaphysics and sectarian garb around him. The great religious leaders were they who called men from their drowsiness and asked them to awake to the realities of life, and thence to

proceed to the rebuilding of a divine temple within themselves, on the fortress of Freedom. There is a time in our life when we are spiritually asleep and morally dead. Exceptions, again, only confirm the general rule. There is a time for sinning and a time for repentance ; a time for sowing and a time for gathering into barns ; a time for birth and a time for death. There is thus a time when we are all caught up in the meshes of carnality, ignorance and spiritual somnolence : but we cannot remain in that state for ever. The voice of conscience within us, calls us, exhorts us, urges us, so that, leaving aside all the sinfulness and limitations, we may ascend to the glory and majesty of Man within, of the Infinite God within. But religion, in plain words, is morality touched with emotion, heightened by the deepest spiritual consciousness. Hence, there is no religion before casting off darkness and ignorance. That is the initial stage of mental awakening, of the incipient Buddhahood of our spiritual enlightenment, as Mathew Arnold maintains in his famous *Literature and Dogma*.*

"And this, knowing the season, that now it is high time for us to awake out of sleep : for now is salvation nearer to us than when we believed. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand : let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy. But put ye on the power of Thought, The *Logos*, *Chit*, of God and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."†

ETHICAL RELIGION

It is because of this essentially moral character of religion, that we do not pay much attention to those apologists and missionaries who begin their criticism on Buddhism by saying that it is an agnostic or even an atheistic religion. We are told that Buddhism is merely an ethical system, but not a religion in the strict sense of the word. Then pray which are the religions in the "strict sense" of the term ? They are Christianity, Judaism, Islam, is their answer. But why ? Because primitive Buddhism kept

* *Literature and Dogma*. Chapter I.

† St. Paul (Rom. XIII. 11-14).

silence about God and about the life that lies beyond the grave. We retort and affirm that precisely because Buddhism invites its devotees chiefly to moral self-culture, without wasting time speculating on a tripersonal God, on Incarnation, Sacraments and what not, it is religion *par excellence*. Buddhism is, and will ever remain, one among the most ethical religions of the world, although sectarian theologians may attempt to give different definitions of religion and truth, which will suit better their apologetic mission, sectarian profession and paid partisanship. Many theologians are merely barristers, with this difference that the latter have some sense of human justice and natural rights, whereas the former are enshrowded in mysteries, divine power, resting on divine authority, and demanding military obedience and blind acceptance.

The crisis of the modern world is essentially moral. Only in this sense you need say that the crisis is religious, in so far as the religious life is nothing but the sublimation of moral life. Buddhism is not a theological system, it is not a summing-up of some historical facts, but an invitation to every man to examine himself, to find out his own miseries, their causes, and the remedies curing his spiritual illness and moral poverty. You may say : "That is too plain. But if Buddhism were only this much, it could not be classed among the great religions of the world". Those people who think that religion must contain in it's orbit so many mysteries, supernatural revelations, divinely-appointed priesthood, officially-defined dogmas etc., simply fail to understand that our moral and spiritual life is based upon some simple and self-evident principles. Is not one single axiomatic and undeniable truth like : "Do good and shun evil", so simple and self-evident ? And yet how many among us follow that axiom and derive enlightenment and spiritual life therefrom ? Take another one : "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God". This is so simple that anyone with a bit of reflection can never deny it. And yet, how few among us are truly and really clean of heart and consequently enjoy the vision of the Lord ? Is not God Himself the personification of absolute simplicity. If, according to some Scholastic philosophers, there is at least the composition between essence and existence in spiritual beings, in God there is no composite nature whatsoever. God is the "Pure Act" of Aristotle, the "*suum esse subsistens*", of Thomas Aquinas, and the "Sat-cit-ananda" of Sankara-

achary. We go on simplifying, untill at last, in the highest perception of Reality, we realise our oneness with that One who is without a second, when everything, that was once complex and complicated, become simple and plain, bright and illumined. For that is the law of our spiritual evolution, the law of our God-approach, of Self-realisation.

One of the greatest contributions of Buddhism towards the religion of Man is its insistence on the moral foundation of religion in place of metaphysical dogmas and supernatural claims. A man need not feel himself saved or proud if he is "converted" from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism, or to Buddhism, or from Buddhism to Islam. There is only one conversion in which the thinking minds in the future will believe, and that is moral transformation of the whole man. Change of dogmas or change of churches and institutions have nothing to do, nor have they any necessary connection with the moral regeneration of man. Besides, the common basis for the common humanity, which we all share, should be based upon this common basic factor and central truth in religion, heightened and refined morality.

All our metaphysical dogmas and religious myths, supernatural revelations and everything connected with organised religions, should serve but one purpose which is morality, its defence, its influence in life. That there is a future reward for virtue and a future punishment for sins is deduced from the principle of causality. But an eternal hell is set aside in this modern world, and progressive purification of the soul through different lives and deaths is re-enthroned in its stead. This is seen by every seer of God. What lies beyond death has not got any necessary link with the moral life, whose ripened fruit is religion. "According to the degree of wisdom, virtue, and holiness that he may acquire, a man will attain to higher spheres, and travelling on that divine and holy path, will rise from one to another of countless heavens. By the grace of God the soul is infinitely progressive,—overcoming sin and sorrow this progressive soul must and will progress onwards and upwards,—it will not decline again upon earth. Sin never reigns triumphant in God's holy kingdom. The soul is first born in the human body,—after death it will assume appropriate forms and pass from sphere to

sphere in order to work out the fruits of its merit and demerit,—and will not again return here”, wrote my father.*

This moral consciousness takes hold of our whole being, and we are held in its grip until we have freed ourselves from its hold by conforming our whole life to its behests, to its inspirations. On marching towards the religion of Man, we will see, to our great surprise, that the spiritual and moral teachings of the scriptures and teachings of the world prophets, substantially agree in their capacity to meet the needs and laws of our heart. It is not because the Gospel says or the Dhammapada says that we have to do, or abstain from doing, something, but simply because it is the law of our being, and our heart clearly says that it is so. “By manly deeds, by earnest striving, by self-denial on behalf of others, and by self-discipline, make for yourself an island of peace that no flood can overwhelm”, says the Dhammapada. But its truth is to be immediately experienced by us, by tasting the fruits that grow from a virtuous heart. Practice of virtue, or victory of spiritual stoicism over animal hedonism, lifts man far above the level of ordinary goodness and limited virtue, with an incessant yearning after a better life, of a deeper insight and a truer hold, ultimately blossoming into selfless service of others. Virtue and vice have always produced the same fruits all throughout the world history, and there will be no going back from the shores of morality and intensified morality, the foundation of that superstructure called religion.

FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS AND THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

What strikes the minds of the common men, and not only scholars and savants, is the simple, and yet lofty, experimental truths that are laid as the corner stones of Buddhism. The four noble truths are always noble and always young. None can attain God-realisation unless he or she understands fully the meaning and the soul-stirring message contained in the four noble truths. May I quote a few verses from the well-known “Light of Asia” of Sir Edwin Arnold :

“Ye who will tread the Middle Road, whose course
Bright Reason traces and soft Quiet sooths
Ye who will take the high Nirvana Way
List the Four Noble Truths,

* Devendranath Tagore. Autobiography, P. 77.

The First Truth is Sorrow. Be not mocked !
 Life which ye prize is long-drawn agony :
 Only its pains abide, its pleasures are
 As birds which alight and fly.

The Second Truth is Sorrow's Cause. What grief
 Springs of itself and springs not of Desire ?
 Senses and things perceived mingle and light
 Passion's quick spark of fire.

The Third is Sorrow's Ceasing. This is peace
 To conquer love of self and lust of life,
 To tear deep-rooted passion from the breast,
 To still the inward strife.

The Fourth Truth is the Way. It openeth wide,
 Plain for all feet to tread, easy and near,
 The Noble Eightfold Path ; it goeth straight
 To peace and release. Hear".

Similarly the eightfold path could be directly experienced by any one. Dr. Rhys Davids called the eightfold path as the "very pith of Buddhism". The right views frees a man from all superstitions and delusions, to which the common folk are a victim and a prey. Right aims mean nurturing of high ideals and aspirations worthy of an intelligent man, so that Man, the ideal Absolute, may evolve from our tiny ephemeral self. Right speech means kindness, truth and truthfulness in words, writings and in all outward signs of our inner ideas. Right conduct is peaceful, honest and pure, behaviour. Right livelihood brings no hurt or danger, causes no suffering or pain to anybody, to no living creature, with the honest means of acquiring and earning one's own livelihood. Right effort means controlling one's passions, flames and desires, fire, and reaching nearer and nearer the infinite ideal of Nirvana. Right mindfulness keeps a constant watchful mind over ourselves. Right contemplation is dwelling on the higher mysteries of life, deriving force and light towards one's Self-realisation.

But what is contained in the Buddhist Eightfold Path is contained in one single verse of the Bible when we are asked to love God with our whole soul, with our whole mind, and with all our powers, and love our neighbours as ourselves.* But all these centre around something essentially moral, for religion is either

* Mathew, XXII, 37. 38., Dent. VI. 5 ; Lev. XIX. 18.

heightened morality, or something else based on morality, so that without moral self-culture there is neither religion nor its foundation. What a wide gulf between morality that is contained in the Dhammapada or in the Sermon on the Mount, and the moral treatises of the stereotyped theologians !

Human nature is perpetually childish before the incomprehensible mystery that envelops him, before the infinite Reality that defies him from all sides. Our tiny personality is not annihilated ; but it grows and expands with every new angle of vision of the self-same Reality, God. It is for this reason we say that even the apparent contradictions in the universe are to be reconciled and harmonized in a higher unity, in a higher synthesis. To achieve this purpose, spiritual monism is the best philosophy we have at hand. Allowances must be made for all forms of thought ; but when our inner self expands and extends so that it can embrace infinity, it will then be easier to fulfil the reconciling mission of our spirit against the dividing and warring trends of the lower man. "Human personality is more profound than any given system or life of thought, and consequently the soundest theory of reality must be based upon the existence of (subjective) conviction of reality which is obtained among men".*

Man is an eternal child before the Eternal Reality of the universe. He fears and hopes, desires and despairs, loves and hates, and that is the whole story that has always been played in the hearts of men. His imagination draws to represent his world and his god like himself ; but his deeper nature is hurt and he seeks his bliss elsewhere. He builds and destroys, he constructs and reconstructs, he gathers and squanders. But why all these ? None can tell me that. Death is a stark reality to him ; but this reality has not got very much influence in his life. It is the immediate tangible now and here that absorbs his whole attention and captivates his heart. He again falls and begins anew fearing and hoping, gathering and squandering, loving and hating. But does not his experience teach him lessons that should guide him throughout his life ? He learns nothing from his experience nor from the lessons which history teaches him. If he learns anything, he soon forgets it. Only a few exceptional minds do really learn from, and are benefitted by, the lessons treasured from their personal experiences and from the lessons of history.

* Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. Vol. 10, P. 671.

These reflecting few, these thinking few, these sanctifying few, are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

How little is the human progress in history, and yet, how infinite is the perfectibility of man ! On the whole what have we gained from the paleolithic and neolithic ages down to this century of aeroplanes, wireless and television sets and atom bombs ? I do not side with them who say that we are losers comparing our civilisation with the primitive and simple rural life of the bygone ages. Nevertheless, I am often led to doubt whether man has not gradually lost his soul, even though he is making conquest of the whole world. Ordinary men are still indulging in an anthropomorphic conception of God, unlike even those most ancient countries which awoke earlier than us to the light of civilisation. But man cannot for long hold these limited views, because the infinite within him seeks its counterpart in another infinite ; and because there cannot be two infinities, man either denies the infinite within him, or he affirms it and identifies it with the external infinite, not by suppressing the infinite, felt and seen within him, but by expanding it into an infinitude, which strives for further expansion and leads us towards the relish of the Infinite through religion. But even when we have enthroned an anthropomorphic God, we are restless, as we need infinite expansion which is mysticism. So in ancient Babylonia behind the anthropomorphism there loomed a keener sense of mysticism, or a thirst after the infinity and eternity of God. "Very often in the ecstasy of invocation the religious poets felt the human image too narrow and straightened for their struggling sense of the infinite. Then the expression becomes mystic, and avails itself of theriomorphic imagery".*

God is as infinite as this universe or the real Self within us. Every communion or touch with this infinite God is likewise an infinite experience, and consequently ineffable and incommunicable. This is the core of every personal religion. Without mysticism, or touch and communion with the infinite, there is no strongly individualised force, and consequently no personal religion. All our inner experiences are surely personal, incommunicably ineffable, and ineffably infinite. Many of the dogmatic formulæ and religious symbols are tolerated, but they are not to be accepted as conveying the reality of religion, which the dogmatic formulæ and religious

* L. R. Farnell. *Greece and Babylonia*. P. 55.

symbols claim or pretend to embody. But what the official religious authorities claim is absolute truth, not only for the symbols conveying religious facts, but also for the formulæ themselves as if they adequately correspond to Reality. The dogma of the real presence of, Christ in the Eucharist is not merely a symbol of God's presence with, and God's love for, men ; but it means that Christ really, substantially and physically "with his whole humanity and divinity"* is present at the moment when the words of the consecration are uttered by a duly ordained priest of the Church. Is it not absurd to impose such a dogma in the literal sense on the scientific and critical minds of the modern world ? No, it is not, because it is a revealed truth, fallen from heaven.

That is the way of reasoning, or hammering down, of an official priest of the Christian Church. That is also the official reply given by the priests in the Lamaist Tibet. That is the official reply of many organised religions of the world. Only in the place of Jesus Christ, they put the Buddha, Grand Lama, Puranas and so forth. But the essential psychology underlying all forms of orthodoxy is there. That is what obstructs men from understanding each other, and appreciating and assimilating the common and central truths in all great religions. But understanding and accepting, absorbing and assimilating, of the central truths in religions do not necessarily mean a uniformity of faith, of a single world-faith, that will have to fit equally Jack, John, and Mary, Hindus, Muslims and Christians, Aryans, Semites and Negroes alike. Far be it from me to suggest the possibility or necessity of such a uniform world faith for all men and all women, for all countries and for all races of the world. That is idle and humiliating, that is impossible and self-destructive. But I do believe that there can be a unity and harmony between religions, by accepting and assimilating the central truths in all the great religions, individual, racial or national, or supra-national, as the case may be. That will lead mankind nearer and faster to the grand ideal of Man, more effectively than by political treatises, interested-alliances, efficient diplomacy, missionary propaganda, as they do to-day. If the present generation is tired of war and truce, the coming generations will have to face the same fundamental issues about man and find a remedy, a solution, for themselves and for others.

* Council of Trent, Sessio XXI.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ROOTS OF BUDDHISM

We need a religion that shall no longer be based upon the abstractions of the medieval metaphysics, upon the superstitions and fears of the primitive man, but a religion that, while accepting facts, will enhance our personality and humanity to an infinite degree, to the highest possible level. We do not want religions that will roast human beings in the untold torments and sufferings of eternal hells, with an angry vindictive God, compelling us to accept books and prophets as the *conditio sine qua non* of the religious life and religious realisation. Perhaps these matters would have sounded as heresies in the ears of many thinkers and theologians of the Middle ages. But we are no more living in their age, nor have we the same outlook on life. And so the insistence on the dying orthodoxy by the organised religions has greater criminality and blindness. They account for the spiritual ruin and moral degradation of millions of human beings who call themselves, Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists. "In the name of religion deeds have been done that would exhaust all the resources of the hell itself for punishment, because with its creeds and dogmas it has applied an extensive plaster of anaesthetic over a large surface of feeling humanity. Everywhere, in man's world, the Supreme Person is suffering from the killing of the human reality by the imposition of the abstract".*

I look at Buddhism as a power to heal the suffering humanity, because it is a religion eminently personal, undogmatic and self-exploring. Its great mission is to relieve man of suffering, and suffering is a tangible fact. To be born is a suffering, to be brought up is a suffering, to be attached to things and persons we do not like is a suffering, to be separated from our love and the beloved, from all that is dear and sweet to our heart, is a suffering. As Saint Paul says : "The whole creation groaneth".† It is only because of some nectarous delight of existence that we are held back from seeing the mystery and truth of suffering in its real colour, and from committing suicide. The sense of impermanency of everything under the sun and beyond the skies is in itself painful, and engenders suffering. Love itself is suffering, and if suffering is not

* Rabindranath Tagore. *Personality*. P. 37.

† Rom. VIII. 22.

keenly felt, it is because of the goddess of illusion, fashioning and guiding the destinies of this universe. How poignant, how nostalgic, and yet how lovable and joyous is to live on earth !

Buddhism as it came forth, pure and unsullied, from the heart and lips of its founder, knows no supernatural priesthood, no organised church, no immutable dogmas, no relying upon anything or anybody to attain religious realisation, save upon one's own self. Its auto-redemptive character is one among the most striking features of Buddhism. Today we need a religion that will teach men that each one is unto himself his saviour and redeemer, is his light and scripture ; for, the infinite life that is flowing, and yet is ever still, underneath our consciousness is the Reality, is the Self, and its realisation is religion. Only that Reality, or the infinite Self within us, is the permanent among the impermanent things of the world, is the only eternal among the temporal things of the universe, is the only divine among the human affairs of world history. Not even our body is really ours, nor is it one with ourselves. How much less our wives, children, cattle or possessions ? But how few among us can sink deep enough and see into his real nature, into his unfathomable depths ! How strait and difficult is the gate that leads to the kingdom of Heaven, and how "few there are who find it" !*

What we were before the dawn of consciousness within us, or what we will befall us after death is unrelated to the fundamental question that is constantly being asked in the hearts of our hearts : How to become happy ? How to end my sufferings ? Which is tantamount to asking : How to lead a religious or moral life ? Buddha did not discuss on the eternity of the world, the nature of creation, the nature of Brahman, nor on the personal immortality of the soul. When he was questioned about these subjects he kept silence, that silence which we see in the greatest minds of religious history, men like Lao-Tze, Socrates and Confucius. Whether we continue to exist or not after death, whether the universe is Brahman or not, whether the dogma of liberty is well established or not, the fact of suffering is here and now, the due sanction of a sinful life is ever-present before the eyes of my heart. The question that interests me most is to know how to lead a life that will relieve me of sufferings, of limitations, and make me eternally one with the Real.

* Matt. VII. 14.

You may say : But that is a mystical or methaphysical problem, which has not got any necessary link with the moral life. Be it so. Then the question is : How to lead a moral life ? But because a moral life cannot be led in all its dignity and implications without self-knowledge, self-control and self-purification are of paramount importance for anyone who tries to lead a moral life. Whether moral life is identical with, or is only the foundation of religious life, is still open to discussion. But this fact ever remains that morality is the foundation stone of a lofty life, a dignified life, for all the citizens of this world.

Virtue, goodness, peace, all these are the positive elements in our life. Evil, violence, untruth, all these cannot hope for a final victory. The deepest within us, in better moments, when we are free from anger, passion and lust, clearly speaks to us, in distinct accents, that our legal and juridical life, is based upon a lower justice, and is only tolerated because of the acceptance of *jus gentium*. Outside that plea the argument falls to pieces and we are confronted again with the same questions about our inner self, with the same eternal problems of our true life. The problems are eternal, for Man is eternal ; and, as long as there is an infinite gulf between men and Man, these problems will continue to haunt us, and will come up seeking a solution with ever-renewed insistence ; for they are questions and problems which all thinking men have to confront while marching towards their ideal, Man.

Men have always investigated (I speak of a thinking minority, not the sleeping and passive majority) about their whence, their unsatisfied desires, about the cause of their unsatiable thirst after the finite and the limited, and the consequent misery resulting therefrom. They have always asked whether their profession, their words, their life, their private and most intimate thoughts, were all one, in absolute conformity, with their deepest longings and aspirations. They wanted to know whether their little, ever-changing consciousness, and the background of it, which is the soul, were really such as they appeared to be to, or believed to be by, the common man, or whether there were some other unseen reality behind, other unexplored regions within their own selves. Now, the history of religious thought has laid bare to us some facts and truths, which are invariably true, because they are based upon the psycho-analysis of man. We never come across any instance when

men have really reached the heights of spirituality and moral integrity without first starting from self-reflection, without entering into the unfathomable depths of the human soul. It is unfathomable, nay infinite, because the deeper layers of our consciousness touch the rock-bottom of all the phenomenal existence, God, wherein is to be found the so-much-sought-after unity and harmony in creation. This eternal bed-rock is spiritual, not matter ; it is infinite, not finite ; it is eternal, not temporal ; it is one and not many. There are only gradations of evolution or self-revelation of this infinite Reality that constitutes the entire universe with all the beings dancing therein. Have not the deepest thinkers, the serious seekers after Reality, testified to the same fundamental truth ? This harmonious unity, this unifying harmony, is proclaimed by a chorus of saints and sages, a legacy transmitted to us in an unbroken chain of thought. Spiritual idealism is but a word to convey and signify this truth in human history, this deeper reality behind our partial visions and one-sided truths.

Buddhists, like the Stoics of ancient Greece, accepted, or simply took for granted, the oneness of this universe. They did not occupy themselves very much with the nature of the Supreme Reality, with the immortality of the soul, nor even with a personal God. They simply observed and studied the laws of human nature, and to the sickness they diagnosed there they prescribed remedies, which are of an unalterable value, because the psychological laws which govern us are immutable. Not so are the dogmatic beliefs, rituals, ceremonies and many other practices connected with religion, as we understand it today. For the ancient Jews it was true that Joshua stopped the sun, or that Moses divided the waters of the Red Sea with his miraculous power. But a time comes when we understand that it is not the sun that moves around the earth, but it is the earth that moves around the sun, and the old belief falls to nought. The Laws of Nature are constant. Before it was a heresy to deny that God created this world in six days. But now we know that not six days, not six years, but billions and billions of years were needed, not for creating (for there is no creation at all in the sense that something is produced out of nothing), but for the nebulous mass to get condensed and cooled down, for the formation of our planet, sun and the stars. This itself is a theory, and it is subject to revision and re-adjustment according to the better

knowledge we may acquire about the universe and about the divine things. Time was when common people believed in the phantastic dogma and narrow and arrogant theory of the "only arc of salvation". If besides the Church there is no salvation, then the Church is there where salvation is attained. Now if Buddhism, Hinduism or any other religion shows us the way of salvation, the Church of God is not to be restricted to the Church of Rome or to the Church of England. Today there cannot be even a single scholar or saint, who is fully informed about the history of religious man on this earth, who can fanatically still uphold the theory that "outside the church there is no salvation".* From this we may pass on to the famous dogmas and the dogmatic definitions concerning inspiration, revelation, and everything else that usually come under the name of organised religion, especially in the Christian Churches.

All that I want to say is that many of our dogmas, rituals ceremonials, and everything connected with them, will change, must change ; but the basic principles upon which a sound and moral life is led are the self-same, and, if at all immutability of dogmas is to be maintained, it is always in the realm of morality, of which the heightened form or superstructure is religion.

Buddhism owes its specific *gandeur* to its insistence upon moral culture, which alone leads man to peace and bliss. "To bring self-seeking to an end, that is blessedness", said Buddha. The ancient confession : "I take refuge in Buddha, I take refuge in Doctrine, I take refuge in the Order", means only this much : "I take refuge in enlightenment, I take refuge in the doctrine that relieves me of suffering and aids me to attain Nirvana. I take refuge in the society of truth-seekers". Certainly dogmatic formulae, or confessions of faith, must not have that rigidity and inflexibility that are officially attributed to them by the Semitic religions.

The impermanency of the whole creation is there in its crude and naked form, and emancipation is to be sought after from the transitoriness of our mortal self, and from everything that is finite. Even the best enchantments derived from creation, music, beauty, love and art, fall in the category of transitoriness. The thought of death haunts me, and the frequent meditation on it gives me a clue to the manifold mysteries that are implicit in life. I love the creation of God, and hence I know I will embrace death too.

* Vatican Council, Sess. IV.

I am marching constantly towards the door of the Unseen Beyond, beyond death. The resources at my disposal, my mental faculties, the science of scriptures, the contents of dogmatic religions, nothing gives me a clear vision as to what awaits me beyond death. Yet, I know, my present happiness does not consist in speculating about my survival after death, or speculating about the nature of that future state. I know, my peace and bliss consist in being and becoming moral, and a morally integrated personality.

THEORY AND PRACTICE

We may very well dispense with the spiritual adoration or cult of any deity outside human mind. Primitive Buddhism did not know any worship, any cult whatsoever, because it had no interest in a Supreme Being to be adored, to be worshipped. When I scrutinize the greatest importance of moral culture in religion, even the questions on God, on the method of approaching Him, on the technique of being united with Him, all seem to fade away into insignificance ; for all these questions have no meaning apart from purifying our hearts, in helping to know our selves, in controlling our wild emotions and mind-clouding passions.

Once two young Brahmins, longing for union with Brahman, the divine Soul of the universe, sat at the feet of many "gurus" to get instructed therewith. Different ways and different roads were shown to them, but they were thoroughly dissatisfied. They began to quarrel.

At last they heard about a holy man, a great teacher about whom India of the sixth century B. C. heard a great deal. This great teacher wandered from place to place "to instruct, arouse, incite and gladden men with religious discourses",—to use the language of the Sutta Pitaka. People from many parts of India went to hear his wisdom. This was Gotama Buddha. When the two young men approached the Lord, he received them with all tenderness and kindness, which is characteristic of Buddhism. Both of them laid bare their difficulties before Buddha, who, much after the manner of Socrates, begins to cross-question them who came to question him. Buddha asks : "Do the Brahmins themselves see Brahman, or know where this Brahman is ? They who instruct-

ed you, have they themselves seen the Brahman? Do the Brahmins speak about the union with Brahman after having seen and realised him in themselves or without neither having seen or realised him in themselves?"

The young Brahmins were compelled to acknowledge that their teachers, the Brahmins themselves, had not seen nor realised Brahman. Now Buddha got the point to start with from the reply of the two young men to whom he says: "So, then, the Brahmins, well versed in the three Vedas have foresooth said thus: 'What we know not, what we have not seen, to a state of union with that we can show the way'? Well, they (the Brahmins) and all men have seen the sun shining up in the sky. Can they now teach men to unite themselves with the sun that they see, and whose warmth and light they feel?'. The two young men reply: "The sun is remote from men, and of a different nature from men, and that therefore union between men and that bright luminary is impossible". Buddha got his clue to go straight to the point. "So, then, only beings that are of one nature can be united? But although men know not the form and dwelling of Brahman, they know something about him. Do they not know about the nature of Brahman? Is Brahman, for instance, proud, avaricious, prone to anger or impure? Has he or has he not self-mastery?" The young Brahmins replied that Brahman has self-mastery, and that he cannot be impure, avaricious, proud or in any way sinful. Then Buddha asks: "But how about the Brahmins? Are they proud, avaricious, deficient in self-mastery?" The young men reply: "They are proud, deficient in self-mastery, avaricious etc". "Very good", continues Buddha, "that these Brahmins, versed in the Vedas, and yet bearing anger and malice in their hearts, sinful and uncontrolled, should master death, when the body is dissolved, become united to Brahman, who is free from anger and malice, sinless and has self-mastery—such a condition has no existence. So that thus the Brahmins, versed though they be in the three Vedas, while they sit down in confidence, are sinking down in the mire; and so sinking, they are only arriving at despair, thinking the while that they are crossing over the same happier land". This episode illustrates amply what a heaven-wide gulf exists between mere theories and practice in religion.

The disciples approach Confucius and ask: "How to serve

God" ? The Master replies : "If we do not know how to serve men, why do you ask me : 'how to serve God' ?"

Sayeth Jesus : "Why do you call me 'Lord', and do not do what I ask you to do ?"

To the aged St. John, the disciples approach, when, even from his death-bed, he repeats : "Little children, love one another". When the saint constantly repeated the same phrase, his disciples asked him : "But, Master, why are you repeating the same thing"? The Apostle of love replies : "That is the commandment of the Lord (Jesus). If you only do that, that is enough". If we do not love men whom we see, how shall we love God whom we do not see ? But love, that redeeming love, has nothing in common with interested-love, self-gratifying love, self-indulging love, bargaining-love, measuring-love, diplomatic-love, and all other names and forms of love, which tend to clot the soul, stunt the mind and crystallize our spirit.

Buddhism is neither a book nor a prophet-religion, but a psychology-religion. Its metaphysics is reduced to that human psychology which is at the basis of every great religious superstructure. In the phenomenal aspect of our being, what are we but a tiny speck on the shores of eternity ? A passing wind, a breeze, in the infinite space of the universe ?

"We are the voices of the wandering wind,
Which moan for rest, which we can never find ;
Lo ! as the wind is, so is mortal life,
A moan, a sigh, a sob, a storm, a strife"*

ZEN BUDDHISM

If we set aside many popular versions and interpretations of the gospel of Buddhism, and look at the heart of the Zen branch, we can unmistakably see there the living force and the central truth of Buddhism still alive and still active. Although the historical Zen sect was founded by Eisai (A.D. 1191), its spirit is as old as Buddha, and, indeed, as old as human nature,—if by Buddha we mean what is divine and eternal in human nature. Then the eternal Buddha is the same as the eternal Christ, the eternal Christ

* Sir Edwin Arnold, *Light of Asia*. Book III.

is identical with the eternal Son of Man, the eternal Son of Man is identical with the Absolute Reality of the universe.

Zen looks into the inward book that is inscribed within every man. It is an emptying out of consciousness, and an "infini-tizing" of one's own personality. The complete subjectivity of thought and action is the mainspring around which the whole of Zen Buddhism moves. It dispenses with all sacred books, with all prophets, and sets aside even the historical Buddha. Zen is completely freed from rituals, temples, priests and ceremonies, from dogmas and creeds, and, in their stead, complete self-concentration and self-realisation are enthroned. It clings fast to the kernel, lest shells and fibres illude or deceive the unthinking many. You say that the kernel could not be conserved without the shell, and that water cannot be drawn nor be held without the vessel. It is perhaps logical, but not true : true, but not logical. Men may make this distinction ; but they will stick to the shell, disregarding or destroying the kernel ; they will claim and fight for the vessel, but they will leave aside the living springs of eternal life and self-purification. This is what has happened in history, and real religion moves in the mystical or super-historical plane. When Boddhi-dharma lived and preached (526 A.D.) the purest form of Buddhism, ordinary men became sceptical. But the later history of China (where the real founder of Zen is Bhoddidharma, the 28th successor of Buddha) proved that the Self-realising religion was at the heart of Zen, and not in those book-bound or prophet-centering forms of Buddhism.

Zen Buddhism, it is true, has abandoned almost everything which goes to constitute a church : a personal God, sacred books, temples, priests, mysteries and many forms of mystifications. But it stuck to the core and kernel of every true religion, self-culture, self-discipline and the consequent Self-realisation. The Zen branch of Buddhism was not, in any sense, another monkish order added to the so many of the existing ones. It lived and fought in the world, in the midst of tempests and struggles, in the midst of persecutions and calumnies. That is the usual course every great idea must pursue, and that wrestling feature of self-asserting religions against the powers of darkness is worth maintaining ; for, after the tempest it is necessary that the calm should ensue, as after the dark night the bright sunshine of the day is bound to follow.

In all the Buddhistic countries, especially in Japan, the great revolutions were brought about through the spirit of Buddhism, filtered through Zen. Every novice, every aspirant of Zen, receives that discipline by which he could plunge deep down within himself, to the profoundest depths of the Supreme Reality immanent in man. God is none other than this highest Reality within the heart of man. If we understand this, the accusation against Buddhism as atheistic or anti-theistic religion will, by itself, fall to the ground. It is not because Buddha or Buddhists are atheists, but because we, the official theologians of the organised religions, have a very low concept of Godhead, the whole quarrel crops up. "The educated man in Buddha's days believed in Deity, as immanent in each man, as the Most, the Highest, the Best in that man's spiritual being or self", says one of the best Buddhist scholars, Mrs. Rhys Davids.

One who has understood the underlying principles of Zen, and has strived to live accordingly, is the most beneficent, most efficient and the most blissful soul on earth. But mind, I do not speak about the Zen as a sect, or as one among the so many religions, but Zen as meaning the Religion of Man. You may call it the eternal Christianity, the Hindu Yoga or Vedantism, or the Muslim Sufism, which are but names to connote one and the same reality, God-consciousness or Self-realisation.

As in the history of human thought and philosophy no system arose to such a daring height, and to such an harmonious unity as the Vedanta, so in religious philosophy no other system arose to such a purely subject-centredness, and karnel-in-religion-seeking, as the Zen. Those few who still vitalize Buddhism and transmit its eternal message to the whole world are consciously or unconsciously Zen Buddhists. I repeat, I do not mean by Zen any sectarian or particularized branch of Buddhism, but that Buddhism which could be indentified with the eternal Christianity, to the eternal Religion of Man. Any one who goes through the pages of any manual dealing with Zen Buddhism will see that there is nothing sectarian in it, for it is a process of making Man out of men, Divine Being out of the common clay.

Let our mind leave aside the commonplace imagination of ephemeral 'I' and 'mine' ; and, abandoning all selfish thoughts and desires, take refuge in the "Doctrine, in Buddha and in his Order".

Who are greater enemies to us than the ill-regulated passions, the quick-burning flames of desires, the uncontrolled appetites of the unruly beast within us ? Or who is a greater friend, or a nobler comrade, than our own mind well-directed, well-disciplined and well-guided ? "Within yourselves deliverance must be sought ; each man his prison makes", says Buddha.

PERSONAL VIEWS

My religious convictions forbid me to subscribe my name to any of the existing religious organisations as an exclusive member of it. Yet, if you insist asking me which of the great religions of the world I am more inclined to, and am in greater sympathy with, I should unhesitatingly answer : Buddhism. I am not a Hindu if Hinduism hugs cast-system, blind acceptance of the Vedas, cow-worship, with the infinite forms of popular cults, beliefs and practices. I am not a Christian if Christianity hugs blind submission to the pope, to the bible and to many ossified forms of Semitism. I am not a Mahommedan if by that religion is understood the acceptance of the authority of Mahommed or of the Koran, of the principles of "religious wars" and "fight against the infidels", and other vulgar and lower forms found in its history. I am not a Jew, with a mythical Moses and with strictly national or racial concepts on God and the universe. I am not even a Buddhist if that is to be indentified with Tibetan Lamaism, with the worship of Buddha, or a passivist attitude towards the realities of life. But Zen Buddhism makes me quite at home with Buddhists, Sufism makes me feel quite at home with Muslims, Christian mysticism quite at home with Christians of all denominations, enabling me to identify myself with all that is truly spiritual, divine and lasting. I feel quite at home a Jew with the Jews, a Brahmin with the Brahmins, a Roman Catholic with the Roman Catholics, a Quaker with the Quakers, a Jain with the Jains, and an all-to-all with all.

Now let me state by personal conviction with regard to Buddhism. The Churches in the West, one by one, degrees by degrees, are losing ground. The Western churches are losing the battle because their officialdom failed to re-vitalize their respective organisations with that growth and development, which are inevitable and necessary to any living organism under the sun.

This break-up of the organised orthodoxy is not a breakdown of Christianity in its real form ; for, real Christianity, as contradistinguished from the Church-Christianity, is immortal and eternal, as it is based on the super-historical Christ. This breakdown of the organised forms of Christianity in the West will open the eyes of the many thinking few, and will create a desire and an urge to bring about harmony and equilibrium between the various thought-currents and religious forces that are at work in the twentieth century, and which are now in an agitated whirlpool, seeking to settle down. Even in our own spiritual life there can be no equilibrium within ourselves until all the physical forces, and even the apparently opposed currents of reason and passion, have become settled and well-poised. This is the harmony and good-will we need among the various races and peoples professing many religions. "Where there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony. This Equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human actions in the world, and this harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue. Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection, and a happy order will then prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourished", says Chung Yung.

I believe that Buddhism has got great resources at its disposal to achieve this harmony and equilibrium between religions. Little is known in the West about Buddhism, its ethical basis ; and its ever-young gospel of sweet reasonableness. But that little which is known in the West has definitely borne fruits, and has accomplished its beneficent mission. Whence comes such a spirit of tolerance and sympathy in the West today towards "heretics" and "pagans" but from the knowledge and appreciation of other religions, and the fundamental principles underlying them all ?

Official orthodoxy, whether in the East or in the West, whether in Churchianity or in Lamaism, in the caste-ridden Hinduism or in Sunni Islam, in Roman Catholicism or in Anglo-Catholicism, is fighting a lost battle. The wind and the tide favour the ideal of Man, the Eternal.

Buddhism, whether it is in its *Hinayana* or *Mahayana* forms,

lives, and will survive this world-crisis in religion, because of its ethical ideals, because of the psychological laws that lay at its roots, for those principles and laws which are necessary for human evolution. Buddhism admits progress by its very nature, and is not reactionary towards the new world opened to it either through Science or by the study and knowledge of other religions. The breadth of Aryan thought, by its very nature assimilative and absorbent, is a decisive factor in the twentieth century history of Japan. No other country in the world has assimilated the whole of the western scientific world, western technique and western ways of living, in such a short time, and in such an efficient and effective manner, as Japan. Yet, the Japanese, except the Mikado and his militarists, have managed to keep their Asiatic soul untouched and untarnished by the staining and stunting forces of material civilisation. Every time I have spoken with a Buddhist Bikshu I have had quite a different experience from that I have had while speaking with priests, *rabbis* and *maulanas*. Here also, as in many other fields of human life, exceptions confirm the general rule.

When the age of credulity, of sacerdotal mystifications, of supernatural revelations and of non-ethical, or even anti-ethical, mysteries are gone, human nature comes forward and asserts its majesty, its divinity, its ideals. That is why mysteries and myths relating to religion must give way when the age of intense intellectual illuminism and earnest passion for moral-culture dawns. Myths and mysteries of religion then must go, because the sun cannot shine in the horizon without first eclipsing the tiny lights, the twinkling stars lording over the darkness of night.

If in all the orthodox forms of Christianity the mystery of the "Most Holy Trinity and Incarnation are its central and essential truths", in all the authentic Buddhistic lore and branches, it is the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path that are considered to be the corner stones of Buddhism. One who does not believe either in Trinity or in Incarnation, we are told, are heretics, and cannot be called Christians. Thus Unitarians,—to a certain extent, even the Quakers,—are classed among the "heretical bodies" by the Orthodox Protestant churches, as the Protestants themselves, in their turn, are considered "heretics" by the Roman Catholics. Denominations are many; but the spirit underlying orthodoxy and heterodoxy are always the same. ●

If Christianity glories in having preached love—but how far the Christians have practised and are practising the message of love is quite another matter—, towards men, Buddhism extended universal love to the sub-human world as well. It could historically be proved that Hinduism extended its domain of love to the entire living world. To many seers and prophets of India, cow-worship signifies the extension of love to the sub-human world. But this interpretation, whether it is given by Gandhiji or by anybody else, does not alter the truth that cow-worship, to the immense majority of Indians, is nothing but a superstition, although done in the name of religion and devotion.

Buddhism is not a religion reserved for a select few. There is no esoteric and exoteric distinction in the teachings of Buddha, who gave the Middle Path ; for, happiness must be accessible to all. What a sweetness, majesty, imperturbability, what an intense spiritual gusto when one looks into the face of Buddha ! Today in Europe millions of families keep a statue of Buddha, either as a kind of ornament in the house, or in deep appreciation of Buddha's message, or for some other private reasons. Jesus is represented as a Man of Sorrows. Buddha, throughout ages, has been represented seated calm, meditative, serene, softly and gently smiling upon the suffering mankind. The great renunciation of the Sakya Prince was completed when he resolved not to retire to enjoy for himself the bliss and light he attained under the Bo-tree but to go straight into the world, leading a most active life to relieve suffering humanity. Twenty-five centuries are now past since that sun of righteousness disappeared from the busy turmoil and death-bearing thoughtlessness of this world ; and yet his message is perennially new. As long as the human nature continues to be what it is, Buddha's message and his Gospel will know no setting from the hearts of the thinking men and women of this planet. Buddhism will continue to contribute its big share in unifying and pacifying this divided and enraged humanity.

Man is not born a sinner nor he is hastening to any final catastrophe. There is no eternal hell because there is an eternal God. But there is a progressive purification of our individualized souls. There are no real individual souls ; for, Soul cannot be but one in the world ; but its different reflections, individualized in

all of us, are our so-called souls, which is also the root of our empirical consciousness. I would rather say that man is born a saint rather than a sinner. Or, be it said, that we are born indifferent, and that it is ours to develop our minds either along the path of virtue or of vice. The Chinese philosopher Kaou said : "Man's nature is like water whirling round in a corner. Open a passage for it to the east, and it will flow to the east ; open a passage to the west, and it will flow to the west. Man's nature is indifferent to good and evil, just as the water is indifferent to the east and west".

A disciple called Kaung-Too approaches Mencius and asks : "All are equally men, but some are great men, and some are little men ; how is this ?". Mencius replies : "Those who follow that part which is great are great men ; those who follow that part which is little are little men". Which is tantamount to saying : those who follow the material in them are material men ; those who follow the animal in them are animal men ; those who follow the spritual in them are spritual men ; those who follow the Man in them are the eternal men. There is no God other than the highest possible ideal of Man.

If suffering is inherent in an unredeemed man, there is a remedy within himself, and nowhere else but in himself. A little reflection upon many vicissitudes of our daily life will clearly convince us of the great truth that each one unto himself is his heaven and hell, his redeemer and torturer, his emancipation and his prison. How much calculating for, and pining after, the fletting pleasures and unholy gains ! Wars and earthquakes, famines and pestilence, hospitals and graveyards, disease and death, hot youth and declining years, helpless decrepitude and unhappy moments, do hardly turn an adult man from this-worldliness to other-worldliness, from material-mindedness to spritual-mindedness, from time-space-bound-pleasures-hankering to boundless and shoreless liberty of spritual realisation and self-realised life. A whiteman or a Negroid-man, a smashing blond or an ugly street maiden, the mightiest emperor or the lowliest husbandman, all enter this world in the same way and dissappear therefrom as equals. Death ! What is the mystery behind this closing scene of our mortal life ?

I dipict before my mind your thrilling memory, O Death ! And constantly I ask myself : And what awaits me beyond this

bitter murderer and merciless smiter of all the born-beings, Death ? No, come you sweet Death and embrace me.

The whole universe outside me keeps silence, and only a dim wick of an oil lamp within is awake to soothe my trembling limbs, and my confused mind. I raise my mind before Eternity and ask the self-same question, and my trembling increases at the Eternal Silence of the stars and the infinite space up above.

A gentle musical voice, with intermittent tunes, reaches the ears of my heart and I am comforted thereat. Every other plane is slippery, and even religions of the world are not so safe. What then shall I hold on to ? The voice of the inner angel replies : "To the moral law".

Every time I have deviated from this living moral code, divinely imprinted within me, I have experienced the hell within. Every soul is unto itself its heaven or makes its own hell.

Not even a passing thought, not a passing glance, not even a single vain imagination, the least fire of thirst or desire, have ever gone without stamping upon me its fruits, and I am the bundle of the fruits of the seeds I myself have sown for ages long.

O sweet, calm, tranquil moments of our life, when, confronted with the nude reality of life, we are freed from the vain, rootless aims and ambitions of life ! O happy hours when in the bosom of the Whole, we find the raft of our salvation, strength of our life, and enlightenment needed for our progressive march towards the ideal, the Eternal Man !

Truths, sparks, scintillating from the one undivided furnace of Eternal Life, make us all knit and closely compact within the grasp and hold of that One, the all-embracing Love, the all-unifying Sympathy, the all-enlightening Life.

Father of light and Lord of mercy, what an infinite distance between me and Thee ! Mounts of sins, clouds of ignorance, raise between Thee and me. Cleanse me, and make me one with Thee. Purity Eternal, enrich our poverty, cleanse our sinfulness, enlighten our darkness !

I know, our Eastern civilisation and culture will ever remain maimed and incomplete without the sympathetic touch from the West ; and the West will remain widowed without the wooing and love of the East. O let there be no East and West, no more barriers between the yellow, dark and the white races ; but let

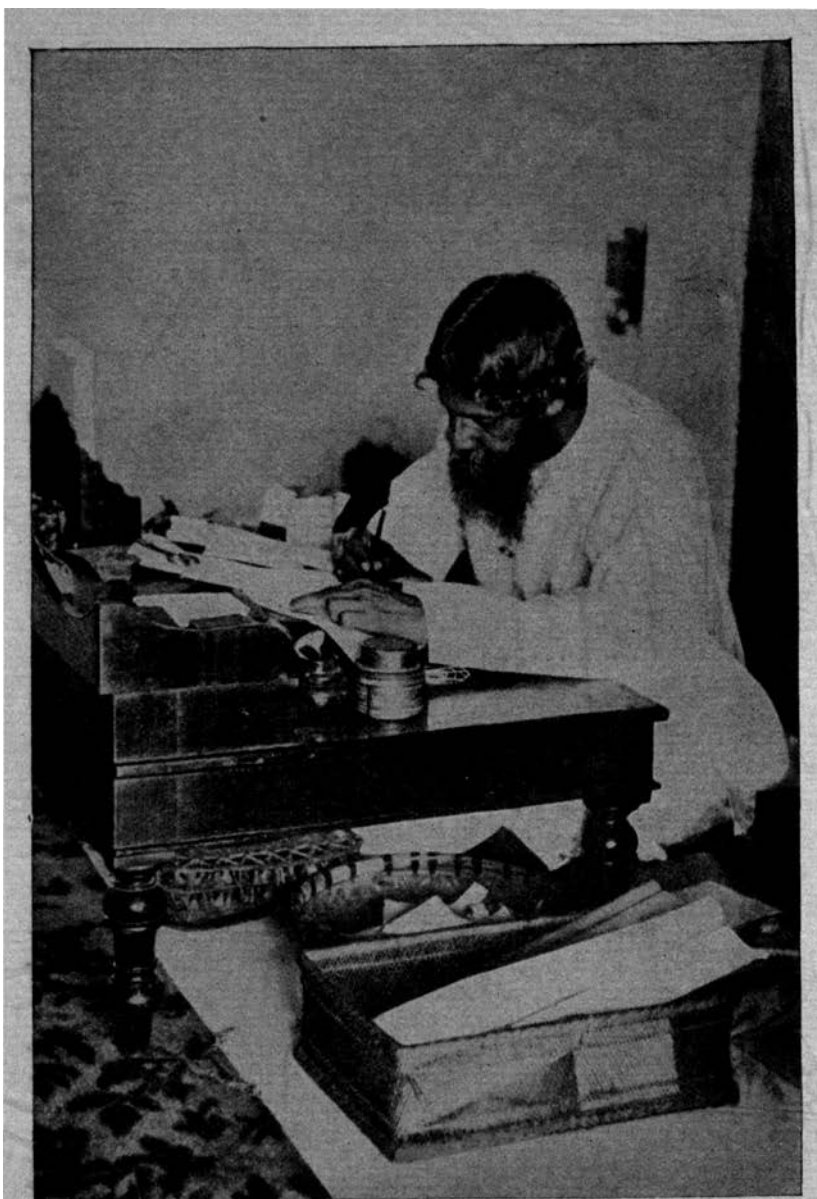
the ideal of the Universal Man be therein enthroned. Let false values disappear. Let not all that is big be considered any longer great !

* If the ideal of Man sinks not into my heart's depths,
 Of what use to me is this life ? Is it anything worth ?
 Lord abiding in our inner self will guide us on,
 And steer ahead towards the Ideal Man, and farther on.
 May Lord Buddha's light shine again, in love, truth and purity,
 In this benighted humanity once more, and may it for ever last,
 As a becon light to mankind all,
 For the *nirvanic* emancipation of the soul !
Buddham Sharanam gachami, dhammam sharanam gachami,
sangham sharanam gachami ;
 I take refuge in Buddha, I take refuge in the Law, I take refuge
in the order.

Namo tassa bhagavato arhato samma sambhuddhassa—
 Salutation to the Holy One, the Blessed One, the Fully-
Enlightened One !

When Rabindranath had thus finished speaking, the audience greeted his address with enthusiastic applause. The chairman, who was the host of Gandhiji in the following year, when the latter went to England to take part in the Round Table Conference which Ramsay MacDonald had engineered to hoodwinck the Indian nationalists, thanked the Poet in the name of the Balliol College, in the name of the Oxford University, in the name of the people of Great Britain. In course of his speech the chairman said : "But it was a revelation for us that the poet can beat us in the field of erudition and scholarship also. When creative poetry is harmoniously blended with scholarship, and when both are truly wedded to sanctity, then, we have the highest ideal to emulate. Dr. Rabindranath is that pattern, the poet of India, of Asia, and now, of course, of the world."

After his address to the post-graduate students there followed a lively discussion among the students. But Rabindranath, the Drummonds, Professor Mayers of the New College, and a certain Miss. Pamela Langley, left the college, through the Broad Street, and after visiting All Souls, Exeter, Jesus and Keble colleges, they drove back through St. Giles Street to Dr. Drummond's house at 15, Rawlinson Road.



Rabindranath at the age of 50

One evening the poet accompanied by the Drummonds and Mr. John MacSweeny, an Irish admirer of the poet, and Von Otto Waltz, a German Indologist, went out for an evening stroll. They walked towards the Carfax (the point where the four main streets of Oxford meet, High Street from the east, Queen Street from the West, Cornmarket Street from the north, and St. Aldgate from the south), and stood there watching at the intense traffic.

Then the poet, turning towards Von Waltz, said :

Samsara is all these ; *Satya* is in the dynamic quiet of the soul,
Not in isolated existence of the little men, but in throbbing
with the life of the Whole my life consists ;
The conscious communion with the heart of this Universe,
When only we see, and sing about the world in rhyming verse.
This Oxford belongs to me as much as Benares or this entire
Cosmos is mine ;
For, all are parts of the mighty City of God, in whom we
all are become one.

Waltz : This, then, is the immortal legacy of your great country, to teach the world the bliss of communion with the Whole. That is Indian genius, India's heritage to Humanity.

Then Rabindranath sang :

HINDUSTAN HAMARA

Here lies on the lap of Earth a country so divine,
Whose resplendent rays have begun to warm and enkindle
The people of Hindustan, varied in races, creeds and colours.
Whence, and at whose call, such an infinite variety flourishes
Underneath the blue, serene, skies of our immortal land
None knows. Here blossoms the flower of Aryan culture,
immortal, grand.
That forms the mainspring and headstream of Indian ways,
True from pre-historic times to our own days.
Of this flower-garden of God we are the nightingales,
Of this divine shrine we are the breathing tabernacles.
Ye boys and girls of Hindustan, your Brahmanic heraldry
is your strength,
Be up, hold your heads erect, march forward, with
wreathes of invincibility ;

In this holyland of races all, vanguards let's form,
 Arise now from the bygone interludes of degradation ;
 British imperialist intrigues won't our march arrest,
 Nor sectarian bigotry can keep us backward any more.
 Eminently synthetic, catholic, harmonizing is India's mission,
 To open the doors of God's boundless horizon to all Mankind,
 Where Freedom, Love, Truth and Justice will reign supreme,
 Where one attains fulness of His Being in bliss serene.
 Great contemporaries breath today in this historical land,
 A Mahatma, whose Self-realised action will for ever stand
 As a divine legacy for generations to come in India and abroad.
 His greatness none can mete save God, which he wants to hide
 In profound humility, genuine, true. With him I've quarrelled,
 For what seemed to me destructive politics. But his ideals

thrilled

Me all the days, and I know the Patriarch of Indian Freedom
 He will ever remain, purified by knowledge, balanced in God's
 wisdom.

Then comes the greatest idealist patriot of Kashmir descend,
 Truly of world-wide outlook, an eminent internationalist ;
 A worthy son of the great Motilal, mainly moulded by Bapuji,
 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, to whose care will be first entrusted
 The sailing barge of Free India. But it now behooves Panditji
 To set aside his panditship and embark upon realist

statemanship about which there are no two ways.

Look, my Jawaharlal, to a soldier younger than you,
 A gift of Bengal, a worthy son of India, whose
 Politics I once doubted, but now I wholeheartedly support.
 Practical, Self-realised, thoughtful, brave hero of Hindustan,
 The unknown soldier of India, yet greater than the greatest,
 Subhas Chandra Bose, my own son, my blessed compatriot,
 my love.

His life, after being persecuted not by lesser personalities
 Than Gandhiji and Panditji, when sacrificed, will ransom be
 For the sins of political inexperience and mis-placed zeal from
 the wrong side.

In Bengal, where tigers live, there breathe princes among men.
 Ram Mohun sounded the trumpet, the Father of an age,
 Progressive, assimilative, dynamic, with reformatory zest.

Who will describe in adequate verses Bengal's sacrifice,
 Bengal's past leadership to raise India up on her feet ?
 On Ramakrishna and Vivekananda I shall'nt speak : they stand
 On Mountain tops, and we on lower vales. Legion is the name
 Of those martyrs and pioneers which Bengal gave to redeem us.
 Yet I see with doleful heart the hellish fiend of provincialism
 Creeping in many parts of India, Bengal itself not excluded.
 O land of Vindyas, Himalayas, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Indus,
 Of the Punjab, Sind, Gujarat, Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Madras,
 Of the Aryans, Huns, Greeks, of Dravido-Negrito races,
 Of fair-complexioned Northerners and Southern *nambudiries*,
 Of Hills, mountains and rivers, land of growing catholicity,
 Now enriched by the doors of the West, grow, expand, grow.
 This, then, our India, *Hindustan hamara*, where breadth of vision,
 Practical idealism, lofty principles, enterprizing action,
 Living Faith, Self-realisation and all that are bright and great
 Should germinate everywhere ; grow, expand, unto infinity.
 Let unity, universality, harmony, sympathy, love, grow, grow ;
 Let sectarian religions fall, dividing creeds be shattered !
 Let my country grow into a city without walls, ever-blooming,
 Ever-striving, ever-marching, forward unto the divine path,
 The royal path to fullest Freedom and unbounded love !

WIDOW—REMARRIAGE BLESSED

A young Indian, much-travelled and well-doing, had to leave his home and his country because he loved a widow with one issue, whom, according to the orthodox Indian traditions, he was not allowed to marry. He went to Austria, and then to England, where he joined his sweetheart and married her while living in Edinburgh. He had come down with his wife to Oxford to see Rabindranath and receive his blessings upon the jolly family. Then, the Poet, looking at them with loving and glowing eyes, sang :

The heaven your young hearts need is now here, in your love,
 Which faced trials and tests for years long. Heaven will bestow
 On you that thrill which can your earthly existence fulfil.
 In "I" and "Thou" relations lies our social perfection, which,
if Heaven will,

Shall be your happy lot. Go now, merry hearts, in peace
 And defy the might of dead traditions which should cease
 To tyrannize when Love immolates you on the altar of sacrifice.
 Do not deny life, my friends, but stand firm on the rock of love,
 Which alone will make your hearts expand to heaven and inspire
 Your soul to launch into such infinite depths and make you sail,
 Sail along the shoreless sea of Love, when rages all around

a tempestous gale.

Love, intelligently experienced, opens the portals of immortality,
 And makes of you gods on earth, with such deep understanding,
 That you can smile and correct the erring steps of mankind.

A *guru*, in Indian thought, is one who has become God,
 By the fulness of life-experience of things seen and unseen.
 His facial expression is calm and speaks and acts like a god,
 To whom disciples throng around, for he holds the keys

of the Kingdom.

Reality is God ; Truth is God ; Love is God, experience Him

in your love.

When the clouds darken your horizon, remember your first love ;
 When blizzard, dismal tidings dawns, search your hearts, rejoice.
 For, in suffering, simplicity, lowliness, God comes and shines.
 March ye together, win the palm of life, sing the psalm of love.
 Seek integration one in the other until you go beyond,
 And reach higher perfection in your deepest Self,
 When words and acts of love become pregnant with infinitude.
 Through your life reform those heaps of futility
 In our ancient land, and make her grow and glow in juvenility,
 By the progressive rolling of the *Asoka Chakra*,

protecting us from stagnation,

Embossed on India's national flag, rapt in eternal adoration.

NATIONAL LANGUAGE

One day some of the Indian journalists and writers living in England approached Rabindranath and discussed with him about the progress of Literature in Free India.

Rabindranath did not feel with many Indian Nationalists that English or any other foreign language should be abolished from India, although he recognised the legitimate claim of

Hindustani,—the child born of a happy marriage between Hindi and Urdu—as the *lingua franca* of India. At the same time, Rabindranath emphasized strongly that all the provincial vernaculars should be encouraged along with the national language. Some languages of India, like the Bengali, Urdu, Hindi, Tamil and Telegu have a rich literature. As they have done in Russia, all these provincial languages—which are twelve—should be further enriched and protected by the State, for they are big national assets.

When the journalists and litterateurs asked Rabindranath about his opinion regarding the script to be used, the Poet replied : The more universalist your ideal and world-embracing your love, the stronger reasons I have to advise you to adopt the Roman script for the all-India national language. 'We need change with the changing conditions in the world, which is daily becoming unified. In modern times, it was not Benito Mussolini but Mustafa Kemal Pasha in Turkey, who set a noble example of this progressive march to both the Moslem and non-Moslem world. But India should adopt modern spirit according to her ancient genius. Roman script for Hindustani is already adopted by many Christian missionaries and by the Military authorities in India. From various national languages of all the nations of the world will come out a world-language, something greater than the modern Esperanto. Universalizing and synthesizing, I maintain, is the specific message and mission of India in the world. There is no doubt that, ere long, the world will adopt Roman Script, not only because it is already in use in most of the advanced countries of the world, but also because of its easy accessibility to all. I do not know as yet what this world language is going to be ; but the Esperantists have done a pioneering work on that line. World-language written in Roman script is the logical sequence of the world-citizenship of the Modern Man, the Universal Man, the Catholic Man, who is breaking open the doors of his isolated nationality, and is plunging himself into the Great Universal.

In India, however, there is a great need to create a large reading public. That will automatically follow when illitercy, poverty and ignorance are removed from the "have-nots" and indolence, corruption and mammon-worship from the "haves" of the country. India must adopt everything that is really great and worthwhile from the West and grow on it. There was a

time, when younger blood was running through my veins, when I dreamt that Western civilization would redeem the world. But now that hope is being shattered as I draw nearer my journey's end. Now I feel sure that salvation should come from that part of the earth where the sun rises. I see Europe now getting ready for another war ; this destructive and soul-denying current in the heart of Europe should stop. For that she should raise her eyes to the East whence have hailed the greatest prophets and sages, whose influence in the past created a Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in Greece, which brought about Humanism and Renaissance and Reformation in Europe at a later period.

You journalists and writers, do not sell your knowledge. Your profession or vocation should not be just a means of livelihood, just to enrich your pockets and expend your precious youth and time in amusements, enjoyments and pleasures. India's need is great. Let not her old fire be allowed to be extinguished ; that fire which the ancient rishis lighted, and has made India what she is, the pride of thinking minds in both the East and the West. Serve the State ; serve Humanity ; serve the Man-God, *naradevata*. Be not anxious for your bread and butter. "A servant is worthy of his food, clothing and shelter", says Jesus of Nazareth.*

Raise India, build her up and serve her whether you are within the sacred soil of *Bharatvarsha* or live abroad. Let not royal sincerity, simplicity and genuine sanctity be left aside. These you may learn better from the little children, playing and quarreling in the dirty streets, from the mud-pots and coal-kitchen of a farmer's cottage. The American sky-scrapers are nothing ; swimming underneath the ocean like fishes too means nothing ; but realisation of the Self is everything. Self is that by which everything else is known, that by which everything else is truly loved, light by which everything else is illumined. Grasp that Self, my dear, abide therein, grow therein. That means to be a human being.

Let India grow in her rich Literature, Art, Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, in her Music, Dramas, Plays and Dances, in Science, Industry, in health and wealth, in love and poetry, in

*Math. x. 10.

economics and wise statesmanship. Let her learn to move with the moving wheels of history and accept all leaders and prophets who help her to grow. Accept, do not reject; include, do not exclude, be truly Indian and thereby catholic universalists, sympathetic and growing in outlook every moment of your life.

The Librarian of the celebrated Bodleian Library, and the Curator of the Pitt-Rivers Ethnological Museum, seeing Rabindranath at the Carfax stopped their car, and invited them to visit the Library. The librarian took the poet and his party around the whole building, which was first opened as early as in the year 1602. As Rabindranath was going around through the large collections of books, he sighed and told Dr. Drummond : How many minds are speaking here from their silent dust ! Libraries are perhaps the richest treasure of a nation. The destruction of this library at the time of Edward VI, falls to insignificance when we remember the vandalism of the religious fanatics who destroyed the great centres of learning in Constantinople, in Italy and elsewhere, in the past.

As they were walking down the staircase, Dr. Drummond told Rabindranath : This huge library is here, where treasures of wisdom, learning and scholarship are stored. But today, alas, the world is too busy with merely scientific, industrial and technical studies, cutting themselves off from the rich cultural heritage of nations. Sense-bound matter is supremely real unto them, not the real values that are derived from the spirit of man. They mistake shadow for substance, appearance for reality, or, as your Vedantists say, the rope for the snake.

Then Rabindranath sang :

APPEARANCE AND REALITY

Underneath the sun everything passes on ; nothing lasts alas !
Time like an ever-flowing stream bears all its sons away,
The purpose of Nature is, nevertheless, achieved by the never-
ending renewal of life,
All imitating that Being whose semblance or shadow is Creation.
For millions of years men have existed on this planet,
Each human being is unique, and "ones-without-a-second."

Which sages and bards of the ancient world have adorned the
 gods and goddesses with.
Nothing lasts in this world, not even those tender affections
 and thoughts of our beloved ;
Much less the balance sheet of our millionaires and empty
 titles and vainglorious names
Of kings, lords and barons of this earth.
O Make me see Reality ; free me from this *hic-et-nunc* seductions
Which bottle up and imprison my heart which's born for infinity.
Tear asunder these fetters of my heart and make me fly,
 hasten and soar nearer and faster, unto Thee.
This body of mine will perish today or tomorrow ; nay even
 these Himalayan peaks and India's rich rivers too,
Will change anon and die ; but Thou remainest eternally
 unchangable amidst this changing universe,
Immortal amidst this mortal creation ; permanent amidst this
 incessant flux of existence.
Too much have I seen of this world ; whose joys and
 sorrows I shared,
And drank deep to my heart's content. Now redeem me from
 those past follies,
From arrogance, pride and self-conceit, from sins of ignorance,
Perpetrated when I was still under the grip of *mayadevi's*
 mortal embrace, drinking of her enticing nectar.
God, most Real, God most Beautiful,
Life of my life, Soul of my soul,
Holding me in your arms, lead me straight,
Pilot this barge, lest I become shipwrecked.
The waves of passion still rage mad,
Still I breath in this world of flesh and blood,
Charm, fascination, dread, terror are all still there ;
O shield me, protect me, save me from everywhere.
Intoxicated in Thy bliss, this world has faded away from me,
No ties are there and I taste the bliss of emancipation in Thee.
O make me freer every day, and let all the shackles fall ;
Unlose all bonds and ties, and free me from thralldom all.
In this mortal frame Thy immortal spirit resides,
Nay, even in rocks and mountains Thy essence presides,

Nothing but Thee I see in this whole universe ;
 Thy mirage and shadow are these creatures, many and divers.
 Give me light to do thy bidding,
 Bid me all which thy strength will sustain me in doing,
 Give me ever-growing vision, ever-renewed rhymes and songs,
 At the relish and realisation of Thy Infinite Self within me.
 On this world stage, generations come and generations go,
 But all are linked in Thee as flowers in one garland,—
 Continuity transcending cause-effect limitations art Thou,
 My adored Creator and Lord of this vast universe.
 The Real always subsists, the basis of this changing world.
 Make me realise myself in the Real ; that will enable me to sing
 And adore Thee, Infinite, with folded arms and bended knees,
 Adoring the Infinity and Eternity of Thee and of Thy Universe !

From Bodleian Library they went to visit Mansfield Theological College and from there to the Magdalen ground. As they stood on the Magdalen Bridge over the Cherwell river, two Indian students from the Trinity with their two communist girl friends from St. Hugh's approached the Poet and started discussing on the Indian struggle. One of the communist girls said : I think Gandhiji should abandon his philosophy of non-violence, and you should set aside your flute and violin, and dedicate to the Sovietization of India.

Rabindranath :—Is not, my daughter, freedom of the mind preferred far be above the freedom of the country, internal freedom to external freedom ?

Then the Poet sang :

SONG OF FREEDOM

The world is dark unto you ; believe me, my dear,
 Thyself art the reason why the fog rises far and near.
 In vain you seek true enlightenment and bliss,
 In parents, wealth or children, or in other trifles
 Which can never peace and wisdom give to your aching heart.
 Dark is our life until one gimpse into the yonder shore,
 Which emits light and gives us life abundant and more.
 Those great men who have left their names in history too

Are but feeble facsimiles of that Reality they loved to woo,
And derive enlightenment, vision and character in life.

Accomplishments and achievements soothe not our inner pangs,
Literary fame and political power do not elicit those songs
Which can lull to rest our innermost, the unfathomable within,
Which, they say, is the throne of the Almighty God, wherein
Lies and dances th' ocean of Truth-Love-Bliss.

Come, come back my soul, to your wonted solitude,
Withdraw a bit from the helter-skelter bustle of the multitude,
Enter your sacred chambers where you see life in real light,
That will enable you to see Soul's grandeur, its invincible might.
Be up, my soul ! Bestir, my heart, and rest in peace.

In this mortal life, my dear, gladden not in anything frail,
Let no sorrow cow you down, make you despondent, sad and derail
Your mind from that single-minded purpose and devotion
To truth, to which give, my dear, your undivided attention,
Which alone will give you peace, bliss and vigour.

"Thou shalt know truth and truth will set you free,"
Was said by Jesus. Nothing truer than this, nothing more true.
Truth is self-supporting and all who are born of truth ;
For truth is God and God is Reality, which foresooth
Is the source of bliss and rest within our hearts.

Linger not, my friend, in those dungeon pits,
Where many mortals fall and hardly ever rise ;
Get freed from sensuality, lust and avarice,
And those mind-clouding passion flames,
Where there is no peace, rest and bliss.

Slave you are not, but free you are born,
A god abides in your heart, wake him up ;
Arouse the lion of Divinity and know you are free.
Political freedom brings not your salvation ;
Nor economic self-sufficiency is an infallible test,
A sure guarantee, for your inner freedom.

Kings, presidents of republics, premiers and ministers,
All are frail beings, subservient to the law of death ;
But immortality is yours, my son, if your head erect you hold

And stoop not before Creation's charms or threats,
And swerve not from the high moral code and ethical life.

This universe subsists on the governance on Morality.

God himself is the Moral Law of this universe ;

Be one with it, my son, and become free.

Look beyond your immediate present, up above,

And see Infinity, see that spacious sky up above.

March, my dear, march ; march along the path of freedom,

For that is the royal road to reach the haven of immortality.

Hear ye, scions of the Immortal, hear you children of Hindustan,

The grand gospel of Self-realisation contained in our sacred lore ;

Announced by our Rishis, proclaimed in our *shastras*.

Be you free, and let all the knots and fetters of the heart

Be torn asunder, torn into shreds, and you, my dear, become free.

What more do you need underneath the sun

When, my girl, you can say in truth from heart,

"I am free now, nothing, none, can bind me any more" ?

Be you free, children of the Most High, and sing the song

Of freedom from one end of the earth to the empyreal heavens.

No family you have, no country which you can call your own,

All the maya-ties are broken, naked you stand now face to face

with Reality.

God and you, you and God,—nay the one merged into the other— ;

One realized in the other, in *Tatvamasi*, for Thou art That.

Great indeed is this song of freedom ; this gospel of deliverance ;

Seek the path of freedom, eschew all forms of enslavement ;

Become free, pure and enlightened. I exhort again become free.





Rabindranath with Gandhiji at Santineketan



Rabindranath at a Santineketan Ceremonial

CHAPTER III

CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATION

TABLE TALKS

A sincere and deep-seated friendship grew between the Poet and the Drummonds. One evening, after taking tea in their garden, they sat together talking on various subjects. There were a few close friends of the Poet and of the Drummonds present at that party.

Dr. Drummond : I feel the Indian Nation ought to understand more fully the significance of your achievement at Santiniketan, the ideal dream of yours to form universal men like yourself. I still remember the thrill I felt when I visited Santiniketan ; its simplicity and majesty. Indian dance has always given me the sense of infinity and eternity of God. Indian womanhood, their modesty and gravity, their sarees and sweet manners, have always fascinated me. She is the queen of India's immaculate grace, beauty and charm.

Rabindranath : I have started Santiniketan ; but I am growingly becoming sceptical about its future, unless, of course, India, when she becomes free, takes up my work. It is for the individuals to start movements, but for the nation to continue them, if they do really serve the purpose of national resurrection.

I feel, I am becoming more and more isolated from the society as I grow freer. As the work of the great Rammohun Roy became adulterated, lowered and sectarianised by the self-styled leaders of the present Brahmo Samajes, so I feel, unless Indian National State takes over my work, Santiniketan also will die out. There is much idleness, inertia, and sense of security at Santiniketan, which dwarfs and stifles every creative enterprise.

The ideal I dream of integration of man through the feminine grace, of woman through manly thought, is waning. I started the school with great idealism and hopes ; but many disillusionments have struck my heart. There are pitfalls among boys and girls for lack of higher idealism in life, as it happens today with the great Hindu University of Benares. Nor I have any spiritual heir at Santiniketan.

When some of the Jesuit fathers of the St. Xavier's College visited me at Santiniketan, I offered them the school, on condition that real catholicity is maintained there. Although Roman Catholicism has its weakness and sectarianism, now, under the light of mature experiences, I am forced to conclude that, after the individualist and divinely free Catholicism of Indian culture, there is no other organised form of powerful universal religion like Roman Catholicism. It is the biggest miracle in history, the mightiest institution that stood the test of times, proof against the most violent shocks of life-affirmation struggles.

Dr. Drummond : Although I am a Unitarian minister, my sympathies are Catholic. To me, real Catholicism is the Religion of Man, on which you delivered the Hibbert Lectures. My German friend, the late Frederick Von Hügel, used to tell me that, after many years of mental struggle, he found a harmonious blending of the Historical, Institutional, Intellectual and the Mystical in the Roman Catholic Church, more fully than in any other religion that came within his knowledge. But unfortunately their wider sympathies, mental integrity and honesty often clash with the official orthodoxy of the Church that they find themselves out and have to plod their weary way alone. That is what happened with my dear French friend, Abbé Alfred Loisy, and the Irish Jesuit, Fr. George Tyrrell.

Rabindranath : I was very much interested to hear about Tyrrell from Miss. Maude Petere, whom you introduced to me yesterday. You see how the birds of the same feathers flock together ! Some years ago, I used to think that for a Christian the alternative lies between Roman Catholicism and Unitarianism, as no honest and intelligent truth-seeker can sleep soundly in a half-way house, as the High, Low, and Broad churches, or even many of the Non-Conformist groups of Churches are in England. But now I see the alternative is between full-fledged Roman Catholicism and complete disassociation from any religious group, and attain fullest emancipation of the individual, which is highest Vedanta.

Dr. Drummond : The Christian missions, particularly the Protestant groups, I think, are doing a great harm to India by relabelling the victims of poverty and ignorance, cutting themselves adrift, off from their national roots.

Rabindranath : Proselytism, as is now practised by mission-

aries in the coloured continents, is largely the by-product of western imperial domination, not an inner urge to bestow freedom and redeeming truth to millions. When this imperialist phase goes, the religious trade also will disappear with it. But for the literary, educational and social work the missionaries are doing in India we shall always feel grateful.

Dr. Drummond : In the so-called "Pagan East", I found the real spirit of Christ and him crucified more than in the so-called "Christian West". Now, my dear Poet, I would request you to tell us freely and frankly what you honestly think about this Western or "Christian Civilization". I guess what you think : but for the sake of these friends who are invited to this tea party, I would plead with you to tell us something. In fact, these two girls from the Lady Margaret Hall, and those professors over there (pointing towards the guests), had requested me to tell you that they would like to hear your views on Christ and Christianity, and on the Churches of the West.

Rabindranath : Saraswati, the goddess of Poetry and Learning in Indian mythology, is now by my side. She is whispering to my heart to speak aloud all that I think about Christianity and Churchianity. I am going to be very scholarly now. I am not saying this humorously, but seriously. As once Socrates went with Phaedrus near the Ilissus, sat by the shade and breeze of a palm-tree and discoursed about Love, so here in Oxford, under the refreshing beams of the setting sun, in this flower-garden, I am going to make a speech on Christ and Christianity. Here it goes, Take it, if you can. All at one stretch, with no poetry, no music, but rigid logic, cold criticism, and poetic scholarship, which, I noticed, most of the western intelligentia want. The curtain goes up, and here we are.

An eminent Indian Christian, a friend of mine and of my dearest friend, Charlie Andrews, Sadu Sunder Sing, said :

"Now I have no desire for wealth, position and honour. Nor do I desire even Heaven. But I need Him who has made my heart Heaven. His infinite love has expelled the love of all other things. Many Christians cannot realise His precious, life-giving, presence because for them Christ lives in their heads, or in Bibles, not in their hearts. Only when a man gives his heart shall he

find Him. The heart is the throne for the King of Kings. The Capital of Heaven is the heart where that king reigns”.

I remember and I fully endorse that wonderful doxology of the French savant, Earnest Renan, who sang : “Rest now in thy glory, noble pioneer ! Thy work is achieved, thy divinity established. Fear no more to see the edifice of thine efforts crumbled through a flaw. Henceforth, beyond the reach of frailty, thou shalt behold, from the heights of heavenly peace, the infinite consequences of thy deeds. At the price of a few hours of suffering, which have not even touched thy mighty soul, thou hast purchased the fullest immortality. For thousands of years the world will depend upon thee ! Banner of our contradictions, thou shalt be the sign around which the fiercest battle shall be waged. A thousand times more alive, a thousand times more loved since thy death than during the days of thy pilgrimage here below. Thou shalt become so truly the corner-stone of humanity, that to tear thy name from this world were to shake it to its foundations. Betwixt thee and God men shall distinguish no more. Thou that hast utterly vanquished death, take possession of thy kingdom, whither, by the royal road which thou hast shown, ages of worshippers shall follow thee”.*

HISTORICAL JESUS AND DOGMATIC CHRIST

Who is Jesus Christ ? What is Christianity ? How far is it a self-realising factor in the lives of those who profess it ? What are the catholic germs of the Gospel, so that Christianity can embrace the whole humanity in its fold, and thus become really the Catholic Church of God ?

Remove the churches from the scene and I will show what is Christianity. Expoliate Jesus of the dogmas and creeds which many churches have affixed on to him, and I will show the real Christ of history. As precious diamonds and pearls, long loost in the depths of mud and dirt, apparently lose their lustre, so Christ and Christianity, encrusted by the church-dogmas and creeds, have lost their regenerative force. But remove that crust and rust, and the precious gem will be restored to its pristine splendour and beauty. Release the sun from the dark clouds.

Christ presented by the churches is a mythological being,

* E. Renan. (*Life of Jesus*. Chapter XXV).

certainly not the historical Jesus, who lived and struggled amongst men some two thousand years ago. Jesus presented by the Churches, backed by almost an unbroken chain of orthodox tradition, is a being outside the realm of history. Jesus, we are told, is the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, is conceived of the Virgin, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, who, after paying the ransom for the original sin inherited by mankind from Adam, and for the actual sins men have committed, arose from the dead, ascended to the heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father. Thence he will come to judge the living and the dead, and the sinners will go to the eternal hell, saints, however, to the eternal heaven.

I need not quote from the creeds of the churches to show the narrowness and limitations men have imposed upon the great personality of Jesus on the one side, and upon the work he accomplished on the other. The historical Jesus stands diametrically opposed to the dogmatic Christ, as that wonderful exemplary evangelist, Dr. Albert Schweitzer conclusively proves.*

Jesus is great; but the churches have bandaged him in swaddling clothes. Jesus is profoundly human, humanly divine, and hence they have presented to us a purely mythological Christ, whose birth, life and consummation are depicted to us in a childish, sectarian and superstitious way. It is not as God, but as a man, as one among us, that Jesus enters the plane of history.

Jesus is great; and great he stands. He is like a gigantic oak tree, which must grow in the fresh and free, open and agitated, air. Gales and tempests serve the oak only to send deeper roots into the soil and to establish in an unchallengable way the greatness and spiritual eminence of Jesus. He has no need of those useless props and flickering fences which churches and church-theologians have built around him, and, in his name, around Christianity. Christianity has its life and growth, receives its sape and nuritment, from this Royal Oak, Christ, perhaps the greatest and most divine religious prophet in history. Do you believe that any exclusive claim will really add an inch to the divine stature of the historical Christ? Far from adding anything, the mythology and superstition of the churches are derogatory to Christ and Christianity.

We welcome that age when the search-light of rationalism

* The Quest of the Historical Jesus.

and scepticism swept across all the nations of Europe and the world, which enabled us to sift facts from fiction, and to lay the foundation stone of a religion, equally acceptable to all human beings, who share the same human nature. Dogmatism stands for the absolute value of some already established tenets ; scepticism stands for an earnest, incessant quest after truth. Dogmatism is intolerant ; scepticism leaves room for every honest doubt ; dogmatism is inseparably linked to the worship of authority, scepticism to the worship of free inquiry and freer expansion of the spirit. Official religions of the West, many orthodox churches of the East, are based upon dogmatism in religion, and hence foredoomed to disappear from the pages of history in the new world struggling to be born. What harm is being done by dogmatism to Religion, to Philosophy, Science, and almost to every other field of human knowledge and human life ! "Scepticism", says Prof. Radhakrishnan, "is a better preparation for philosophy than dogmatism. When dogmatism holds that there are some conclusions which we may accept without inquiry or reason, scepticism rightly revolts against this attitude and condemns it as unphilosophical. Criticism is the breath and being of philosophy. Dogmatism is the enemy of truth and knowledge".*

It is not from the existing organisations of the Christian churches that we should ascend to the knowledge of Christ and his eternal message, but it is from Christ and his message that we have to descend to the position of the existing churches, and judge them accordingly. As J. B. Bossuet said, every time there has been a spiritual renewal and revival in the life of Christendom it always sprang from re-considering and re-thinking the inexhaustible personality of Jesus Christ. It is because Christ is too divine that we rebel against the humanism of the churches ; it is because Christ is too humane that we rebel against the theocracy of the churches ; it is because Christ is too universal that we rebel against the sectarian and limited dogmas of the churches ; it is because Christ is too sublime, that we rebel against the mundane and vested interests of the churches ; it is because Christ is too sublime that we do not bend our knee to the tower of Babel erected by the churches and sects.

* The Reign of Religion in the Contemporary Philosophy. P. 3.

Church-minded theologians and church-officials believe that they are rendering a great service to God and religion if they could defend, by foul means, the myths, legends and dogmas that generally go by the name of organised Christianity. It is by defending the miraculous conception of Jesus that we do great injury to the personality of Jesus himself, to his mother and to all men and women, who have not lost their reason by the sheer force of religious anachronism or authoritative faith. Churchmen have built up systems about the personality of Jesus, systems that would have shocked Jesus himself. How much more his disciples, they who had understood the meaning and implications of the Sermon on the Mount, of all the ethical and mystical teachings of the Carpenter of Nazareth ?

Church-theologians cannot even think that to admit Jesus' entry into this world like any other human being, far from being derogatory to the person of Jesus, is all for the edification and example of his fellow-creatures. Now, in official theology, Jesus is left suspended in the air, neither on earth nor in heaven, but hanging between both.

Jesus sought salvation in his ancestral religion. But from the very outset he found out that the kingdom of God laid buried within his own heart. He retired into the desert, where, immersed in prayer and fasting, he attained full enlightenment and grace from within. He acknowledged that the living principle pervading the whole universe is one with himself. He gained the experimental certainty that his Father and himself are not two, but one, and one only. It is from this sense and keenly-felt realisation of unity of everything that his whole moral code sprang up. Why is it that one should not hurt others ? Because by hurting others we hurt ourselves. If selfish love make us blind not to see this truth, we have something of the religious seed in us. We must do unto others all that we like that men should do unto us, for, the unifying principle in us is that religious seed. We must do unto others all that we like that other should do unto us, for, the unifying principle in us and in them is that One, the Father who is in heaven. We are not to resist evil by evil, nor return blow for blow, for ignorance is never quenched by ignorance, but by wisdom, and evil is not remedied by further evil, but by good, for good is the positive element in life. After having set aside selfish love, we

are asked to love even our enemies and pray for them who persecute us. Why? Because the unifying positive element in all, whether in saints or sinners, in the children of Darkness or in the children of Light, is always the One, the Father.

Jesus' message is the Cross; but not a cross that is accepted for its own sake, but that cross which is a necessary concomitant, a trial, to be borne by every disciple of his, in his or her struggle against the forces of wickedness and darkness. In practical life Jesus is a dualist; he assumes the fact of evil in this world; but evil is not final, for, only the positive realities of life can persist and survive the struggle for existence.

Jesus has an intuitive vision of the inner laws of man, which he calls the will of his heavenly Father. The infinite vision he had of the Spiritual Reality he tried to convey to his followers in a number of parables, rich in its significance, fresh in their appealing sense. The ordinary *rabbi* at that time quoted and taught everything based upon the scriptures which the Jews believed as divinely revealed; but Jesus appealed to the inner law which any one can read within himself. If he appealed to the Scriptures, it was only to confirm his own teaching. His teaching was clear, direct and appealing to the hearts of men. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes".*

From the first dawn of his consciousness, it seems that Jesus was in constant communion with God, and almost uninterruptedly this God-consciousness persisted all throughout his life. His bread was "to fulfil the will of His Father who sent him."† In him we find the incarnation of the divine will loyally recognised and duly fulfilled. Jesus is perhaps the only prophet known to history who has kept such an uninterrupted and ever-increasing God-consciousness from the first moment of his conscious life to the end of his great sacrifice. His conviction that he is in close touch with the Father in a way quite unique, in a way as hardly none before or after him did as to identify himself with the Son of Man, predicted by Danial, and to be conscious that he was the head and leader of the apocalyptic hope and escatological catas-

* Matth. VII. 28 and 29.

† John. IV. 34.

trophies, which had to terminate in his own personality. "Jesus is convinced that he so knows God as none before him, and he knows that he has the calling to impart to all others by word and deed this knowledge of God, and wherewith the filial relation to God".*

But the fact that Jesus shared the eschatological illusions of the Jews of his time does not impair in any way the greatness and divinity of his personality. Religion essentially is self-culture, self-knowledge, and the utmost moral perfection of the individual, and, in this, Jesus remains unrivalled in history. It is quite natural that even the best illumined prophets are swayed away by the currents and conceptions prevalent in a given period of history. Scientific precision and metaphysical speculations are simply irrelevant when the moral and spiritual greatness of a person is to be gauged. If fanaticism and exaggerated enthusiasm, vivid imagination and burning zeal are found to be inseparable from many missionaries, especially in the Semitic religions, it could be defended that Jesus was not frenzied by such apostle's concomitant features. That Jesus did not know all the sciences of his time, Greek Philosophy, universal history, comparative philology and religions, are no arguments to throw dust against the gigantic spirituality and greatness of the Christ. He is lording over the hearts and minds of men, for, by his intense and deep-rooted spirituality, and constant communion with God, he rose to such mystical heights which few mortals on earth can ever hope to reach.

Why insist on the miracles and prophecies without number, O theologian of the Orthodoxy, if you wish to establish the greatness and divinity of Jesus? Or why insist upon the eschatological errors, limited knowledge of Jesus, and on other secondary items, O modern hypercritic of the Bible, and disparage the unchallengable personality and divinity of the great messenger of God, Jesus? Has the sun any need of flattering words, or disparaging criticism, to make its rays radiant or obscure in the sky? If only we could remove all the puerile and obscurantist dogmas and creeds which the churches have built around Jesus, the personality, the grandeur and divinity of Jesus will shine brighter and better, as the moon when released from the dark, opaque clouds.

Harnack. *Das Wesen des Christenthum.* P. 80.

The fact that Jesus lived and died for the God-realizing ideal of the highest type, which has the most universal significance, alone is quite enough to establish the majesty and divinity of Jesus. When I say I believe in the divinity of Jesus, I have no intention to lend my name in supporting the church-orthodoxy, which is exclusive, sectarian, war-mongering and uncritical. Divinity is immanent in you and me, in every being on the earth. But in Jesus it was manifested in a fully developed way, in rich intensity and fulness; for, religion is nothing but the manifestation of divinity already in man, of the birth and growth of Godhead already implanted in man, of the evolution and realization of the Infinite already latent in man.

Is it not a great miracle that Jesus, born and brought up in the Jewish religion—which was narrow, national, racial, and credal, yet moral, spiritual and potentially universal—could set aside all the world-realizing elements, and live and preach that God-realizing aspect of Judaism, which, then, is no more Judaism, but the Universal Religion of Humanity, the Religion of Man? His life of prayer, his unceasing apostolate of “doing good”, his inspiring example, his unflinching loyalty to what he believed to be true and just, his fearlessness and defiance of religious orthodoxy, his indifference and scorn for the political quarrels and sectarian gospels, his ever-fresh thoughts clothed in the plainest, most forcible and poetic language, his affability, his social ties, his religious cosmopolitanism, these and many other features of his personality we glimpse at through the Gospels are greater miracles, and more cogent arguments to establish Christ’s divinity, his divine sonship and his con-substantiality with Man, the Eternal, than the far-fetched syllogisms of the church-theologians.

Jesus did not count the cost; he gave without taking, becoming in this way a pattern of Him who is the greatest Giver without being a taker, the greatest Sufferer, who relieves the sufferings of Creation, God. Is not in the whole Creation, a giving, a self-emptying, of the Infinite? We, in our phenomenal life, are but growelling insects, and yet the Lord bears all the burden for us, sacrifices Himself for our own Self-realization, spiritual enlightenment and God-becoming. He comes to our souls like a gentle breeze, waving across our mortal frames and cheering us with the perfume of eternity and immensity of the Immortal Reality.

When this touch of the Infinite thrills and awakens our finite soul, then is the clear vision of the Real granted unto the mortals ; then is the taste of the things ineffable sent from above for the relish of the little man ; then it is that we are raised to the bliss of divine ecstasy, which transcends all other ecstasies and trances which the earth can produce and bestow to human heart.

The little man is a tiny speck in the whole Creation, enveloped in, and surrounded by, mortality on all sides ; and yet how great is man in his thought, in his ideas ! "*Par l'espace, l'univers me comprend et m'engloutit come un point ; par la pensee, je le comprends*", said Blaise Pascal. The real greatness of man is in his thought, and upon the thought of each one is based the moral and intellectual life. Do you want to measure the greatness and divinity of Jesus ? Look at the sublimity and divinity of his thoughts translated into dicta by the evangelists. Look at the gospel of practical salvation given by Jesus. Even if you were to prove that the Gospels are not strictly historical documents, you will be forced to admit that there is at least the nucleus of the teachings and life of Jesus engraved therein. From the canonical Gospels, from the apocryphal books, from the Patristic literature, we can re-construct the image of the Prophet of Nazareth. This image, this portrait, is such as to be classed among the few greatest seers and prophets who have appeared in history and illumined the benighted Mankind.

THE RELIGION OF JESUS

The religion of Jesus, unlike that of many other prophets, was mystically dynamic and dynamically mystic. There cannot be the desired equilibrium in man unless the action proceed from the depths of mysticism and mysticism is saturated and deified by action, fecundated and fructified by the divine dynamics. We need a mysticism that will not let to evaporate the progressive tides of human history, the magnificent conquests of the human spirit, and the great achievements of Man in this world, into sheer nothingness. I do not find this equilibrium between mysticism and action so adequately blended and fully poised in any religion save in Christianity,—no, not even in Buddhism and Hinduism—.

I have often thought that oriental mysticism, being the highest type, is unfit for this world of action, especially in this

dynamic age. The general trend in the oriental religions is to insist upon the divine, even at the expense of the human, upon the mystical, even at the cost of the historical. Although that looks better than to insist more on the human side at the sacrifice of the divine, more on the historical, even at the negation of the mystical, I should say that then we get a very lope-sided view of the Reality, which must integrate the whole personality of man, who is subordinate to the Ultimate Spiritual Reality, that is the basis of human thought, and every existence in this world.

"You cancel all the fallacious distinctions we are commonly accustomed to rely on, and history as the act of thought, then, it seems nothing is left but the immediate consciousness of the individual-universal in which all distinctions are submerged and lost. And this is mysticism, excellent in making us feel in unity with God, but ill—for thinking the world or for acting in it", said Benedetto Croce while criticizing this one-sided mysticism.*

It is because of the inherent dynamic mysticism of Christianity that it became the religion of the most dynamic races of the world, the Indo-European races. When action was separated from mysticism, the glory of the East sank lower and lower, until at last various races, wave after wave, swept across the immense regions of Asia, exploiting the land, suffocating the people and, above all, spiritually degrading and killing millions of the Asiatic continent. If this is done by the so-called Christians, the fault is not of Christianity, but of the militarist and church-interpretations of the Christian faith. It is not Christianity that has failed ; it is the so-called Christianity that has proved to be wanting. It is not the Christians who have plundered, massacred, looted and slayed peoples and nations ; it is the so-called Christians who have betrayed the principles of the Christian gospel, and have forfeited the sacred heritage of Jesus Christ and his message. But why spend time and energy in inculcating the churches and creeds ? Instead of wasting time in useless arguments and bickerings, it will be far wiser for the God-realised men to come forward and show this weary and war-bitten world the way out from the self-made labyrinth, the way of salvation from the self-made prison and fathomless dungeon, in which we are all helplessly lost.

* *Theoria e storia della storiografia*. P. 103.

Orthodoxy will not be beaten by cold reasoning, for orthodoxy is based upon sheer authority and mass-psychology, which no amount of reasoning or refuting can shake. If rationalism and practical religion, free-inquiry and complete unfettered exercise of private judgement were to triumph, it will have to be achieved through silent action, not by discussion and academic verbiage. The essays of Montaigne, Rousseau and Voltaire influenced men only after the ground was prepared in France, in Europe, by the silent mystics and saints.

Christianity is inseparable from the life and ideals of Jesus Christ. He remains a city built on the mountain-top of spirituality and divine vision. The catholicity of the religion of Jesus consists in this central fact that religion is freed from the stolid and complicated ceremonies, rituals, dogmas and creeds of an official priesthood, from the limitations of revealed books and revealing prophets. "Never has there been any one less a priest than Jesus, never a greater enemy to forms, which stifle religion under the pretext of protecting it. In this we are all his disciples and his successors ; by this he laid the eternal foundation-stone of true religion ; and if religion be essential to mankind, by this he has merited the divine rank which the world has accorded him"—*

To be a Christian means nothing less than becoming another Christ. Christians may quarrel with Buddhists, the Lamaists, may wrestle against the Roman Catholics ; but if Jesus and Buddha were to meet, there would be perfect harmony, understanding and peace between Christians and Buddhists, for both prophets reached the same goal. When the so-called Buddhists, the so-called Christians, the so-called Muslims become perfected in the central truths of their respective religions, they will understand each other, they will speak the same language, they will experience the same fruits of God-consciousness or Self-realization. But, alas ! we are merely nominal Christians, nominal Hindus, nominal Muslims, and hence the walls of division continue to exist and the apologists of sectarian creeds get on well with their business. But once we begin to taste the nectar of religion in action, within our hearts, we realize that religions are but different roads, leading to the same goal, to the self-same God or Self-realization.

* E. Renan. *Vie de Jesus*. Cha. V.

Jesus lived in the heaven of God-vision, and hence he avowed that lofty disdain of the "world", and everything that savours wordly. He had fixed his eyes on to the invisible region of God's kingdom, of Truth and Righteousness. His words and deeds were all saturated with this divine odour, this divine relish. The infinite world seen and lived by Jesus and other great seers of God, could be dimly glimpsed into, when we recall those happy transient moments, when we ourselves had touched almost the infinity of God, when, by degrees, wider horizons were opened to our minds, enabling us to launch ourselves into the infinite ocean of the Life and Love of God. These are but flickering lights, passing flights of our spirits across the infinite to gaze and realize God ; yet quite sufficient to lead us through analogy to the vision of the spiritual life which great religious leaders had experienced.

What is that ineffable feeling and vision, when our tiny speck of consciousness within expands and submerges itself into the thrill and palpitation of the Universal Consciousness, God ? The infinite space and eternal silence of the skies strike us with undefinable awe, and we become naturally one with the universal life of the Cosmos. Do you call this a vain illusion ? Then, this "vain illusion" is an infinitely precious jewel which I must seek and find at all cost. To be lost, or temporarily eclipsed, within this ocean of thought and cosmic-consciousness is infinitely more preferable than to be hankering after the perishing treasures of this world, which we did not bring when we were born into this earth, which we will not take with us when we hasten to the Unseen Beyond. How infinite is the vision of the Spiritual Reality !

" *Mirando interminati*

Spazi di là da quella, e sovrumani

Silenzi, e profondissima quiete

Io nel pensier mi fingo ; ove per poco

Il cuor non si spaura.

Così tra questa

Immensità s'annega il pensiero mio ;

*E il naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare"—**

On contemplating the boundless spaces beyond

The superhuman silence and the profoundest rest

* Leopardi. L'odo all Infinito.

There in thought I bring myself unto me,
When the heart has so little to fear.
Thus amidst this immensity my thought is drowned,
And even shipwreck is sweet to me in this sea (of life).

How shall we go to the society and describe that touch and taste of the infinite realization of our deepest Self, when this tiny planet of ours expands unto infinity, and everything small and great, lowly and sublime, are seen and contemplated from the divine summits of unalloyed eternity and immensity of the One All-Pervading Spirit? There is no language that can translate, can fully convey, what we behold, hear and feel in those rare moments of our life, the vision, the relish, the only mainstay of our earthly sojourn, that makes us to hang on, on and on, on to the divine thread of Love Divine. Our words and expressions, when transferred to the realm of the Spirit, must necessarily be symbolic, shadowy and inadequate. The intense concentration of thought, and the fullest play of the most subtle and sublime emotions, all are working together to produce that state of inward blessedness, with no creature to support us, to rely on. For, in religious experience, our creatureliness itself is at times transcended, and we feel inward security against the thwarting and challenging play of the forces of the outside world, and we become ready to wage war, and win battles in our spiritual combat, underneath the sun.

“Another gift,
Of aspect more sublime ; that blessed mood,
In which the burden of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened : that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until, the breath of this corporal frame,
And even the motions of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul :
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things”—*

* Wordsworth, Lines on Tintern Abbey.

It is for this reason, that the great seers and saints of God, remain unmixed with the common clay. Their God-vision and spiritual life cannot be codified or interpreted by the churches, and other organised religions in a way suited to the dignity and mission of those religious leaders. The prophets taught us about heaven, but the churches are administering to us mere sand and dust of the earth. The prophets were bestowing upon the poor humanity the bread of eternal life, but the organised orthodox religions, who monopolize those prophets, are giving stones and serpents to their children. The religious prophets sacrificed themselves, annihilated themselves, to feed and nurture their young ones; many of the organised religions are feeding upon their own sheep, so that the pastors and shepherds are maintained at the cost of the lives and deaths of their sheepfold. The religious prophets were all-sided with an infinite vision before their mind; but the religions claiming their origin and foundation from those prophets are one-sided with narrow and even obnoxious theories. The prophets stood for the life of a living inspiration, continually flowing from the infinite source, in an infinite way, through the infinite chanel that is within us; the religions that came after them often stand for a stagnant orthodoxy, dogmatic immutability and suicido-maniac rigidity. The prophets had no other guide, no other rule, other than the Infinite Self revealing within themselves; but the organised religions formed after them, and in their name, have few other norms, few other rules, than the dogmatic intangibility, liturgical display, and, above all, that formal legalism, legal formalism, in everything connected with their organisation.

Jesus Christ is the central name in history, and he small remain such to the end of history of the *homo sapiens* on this planet. His name cannot be cancelled from the heart of humanity at large. Churches will fall and decay, will die and be buried, but Christianity cannot and will not die out from the face of the earth. This shows, that many of the organised religions and churches in the name of Christianity are not even the outer vehicles that carry, the outside shells that contain, the essence and the kernel of Christianity. The Christian spirit is infinite, and cannot be imprisoned within the walls of any orthodox church. If something is to be said in favour of organisation and dogmatism of the

churches, let it be remembered that there are many arguments that could be levelled against it.

Christ and Christianity are the same today, tomorrow, and for ever. Its tap-root goes and touches the very infinity of God. The Roman Catholics will claim the dogmas on Christian religion, the "infallible church founded by Jesus Christ" as essential; the Protestants will accentuate their infallibility on the Bible or in some Confessions of faith or in some ancient creeds and dogmas; but Christ and Christianity remain untouched, untainted, by all these man-made shackles, unimprisoned and unfettered by these man-made walls.

CHURCHIANITY AND CHRISTIANITY

There is a Churchianity as there is a Christianity; the former availeth little for the real benefit of the present day humanity. We must therefore ask Christianity what it can contribute towards showing us a way out of the chaos and wilderness into which the world is plunged today. Your distinction between the grain and the chaff, water and the vessel, are no more valid, when you have forfeited your ideal, your mission, your commission, when many an organised orthodox Church have forfeited the sacred trust of Christ. In the place of adoring the Father "in spirit and truth", the churches have consecrated the worship of dogmas and creeds, saints and relics; in the face of clear principles on non-violence, the churches have waged wars, holy wars, and crusades. Even in this twentieth century, the churchmen instigated Italians and Germans to fight, saying that their churches are engaged in a holy war against the "Bolshevich pest" and the "anti-Christian Russian Communism". The moral teachings of many churches are primarily formal, secondarily legal, and thirdly just as worthwhile. But if you set aside this third-rate morality of the christian churches, you will find nothing more and nothing less that can serve us as a guide in our present day war-battered, authority-ridden and atom-bombed humanity towards the dream of religious unity, to this blessed *Utopia*. When we say that the churches have to go, we mean thereby that Christianity has to come. Light and darkness cannot co-exist. Truth and lie cannot live amicably at any time. The religion of meekness, patience, humility, self-sacrifice, of the

great and unfathomable mystery of the Cross, cannot exist side by side with the ecclesiastical court, dogmas-defending police forces, episcopal authority, Bible-worship and so forth. One or the other must live at the expense of the other. There is no other open door for the resurrection of Christianity. There are no two faces to the Cross of Christ ; no half-way house between Christ and Church.

But are the churches to be uprooted or annihilated ? No, not uprooting, but new-sprouting ; not annihilation, but reform and internal regeneration that's needed. Is not the whole course of human history an incessant march and an uninterrupted race towards the ever-new, ever-Unseen Beyond, to the unseen future ? Have not many religions, after having flourished for a certain time, fallen off and decayed for the lack of internal reform ? History should answer these questions, not apologetic bias.

Religion aims at leading men of this world to other-worldliness. Until we are lead thither, namely to God-realization, it is absolutely necessary to take the world as supremely real, not attributing to it any ultimate value, but a relative reality, in sofar as it leads men to the ideal goal of human existence, the vision and realization of the Absolute Reality. Now the history of Christianity, as distinct from the history of Churchianity, seems to me to have achieved the ideal of a God-realizing religion as a world-affirming force, far more powerfully than any other religion. Christianity, in a special way, has asserted and taught that virtue and morality are to be lived and proved not by retiring from the world, but by living in it, by facing the hardest realities of life. I am aware that some of the modern Hindus try to give a kind of twentieth-century interpretation to some essentially other-worldly aspects of the Indian religions. The interpretation of Hinduism given by Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, the Brahmo Samajists, Sri Aurobindo, Gandhiji, Radhakrishnan, Abhedananda and other leading men of contemporaneous India, is not explicitly there in the Indian tradition. These reformers are touched, awakened and aroused by the call of the West, identified with the Christian churches, but really supported and nurtured by the under-currents of Hellenism. You may hold that Hinduism contains in its tenets the potential germs for all the reform-movements, some of which have already taken place within our country ; but we cannot deny the fact that for our best interpretations we owe much to our contact with the Christian

West. But whether or how far Churchianity is in Christianity, or Christianity is in Churchianity, is to be discerned and discussed by subtler minds, and by students more competent, than me.

Is it not due to the vitality of the Christian life that, even when the orthodox churches gained power and domination, authority and commanding power, the true Christian elements always continued to struggle, now as under-currents and now as surface-waves, and have always held its right track, its orientation, fulfilling its divine mission in this world? If the power-hunting Cesaro-Papism went on creating its theological systems and creedal dogmas, there were men and associations of men who have stood for the validity of human reason against the tyrannizing authority of the Churches, for the natural capacity of man to do good and redeem himself against the mechanical, arbitrary assumptions on predestination and grace, for the common brotherhood—which we all share with Jesus, and Jesus with us, in the way he entered into the plane of history, he lived in this world and departed therefrom,—against the supernaturalists, and all those, who, under the pretext of defending religion and dignity of Jesus, only do harm to Jesus himself, to the laws of this relative universe, to the history of humanity at large. They tell us that belief in the enclusive virgin-birth,—Buddist scriptures, Egyptian and Greek traditions also have their virgin births. Either all are true or none—in the message of the Archangel Gabriel, and many other myths contained in the pages of the Gospels, are all to be accepted in the literal sense, in the official sense which “the holy Mother the Church has held and still holds”,* under pain of mortal sin, of being charged with, prosecuted for the sin of sins, namely heresy, and finally to be thrown into the depths of infernal abyss, where one is to be roasted and tormented by devils and scorpions for all eternity. All these, for the man-in-the-street, in this century, are nothing but the most puerile myths. The churches need not hope for the world-recovery by reverting to these myths and superstitions, which perhaps in the Middle Ages could have been held by those who were still left unredeemed from the coils of superstition, the fetters of the Churches and the fads and spells of priestcraft.

There are many more reasons for which it seems to me that a

* Cfr. The Tridentine and Vatican Councils.

sharp distinction between Christianity and Churchianity is to be drawn and defended at all cost, unless you want to lower the ideal gospel of Jesus Christ and his divinity to the standard of the church-canonists and the obscurantist slugs.

I repeat, Christianity has not failed ; Christianity cannot fail. It is the Churchianity that has failed ; that has lost its grip, its hold, upon the masses in the West. It is the Churchianity that has become thoroughly incompetent, and utterly powerless, to cope with the conditions and meet the needs of our times. Churches believe that they are defending Christianity by defending their sectarian creeds and dividing dogmas, whereas, as a matter of fact, they are nipping Christianity in its bud, devitalizing the central truths and facts of Christianity. That Jesus sacrificed himself for being true to his ideal is the central truth and fact in Christianity, not that he was conceived of the Holy Ghost. That Jesus was the deadly enemy of all kinds of priestcraft, idol worship and self-imposing authority, is the central truth and central fact of Christianity ; but that Jesus was the high-priest, that he sanctioned idol worship, image worship, Bible-worship, these are the super-accretions or later-inventions made by the churches around the great personality of Jesus Christ. That Jesus was meek and humble of heart, that Jesus prayed for them who persecuted and even killed him, that he spent nights in constant communion with his Father ; these are the central truths and central facts in Christianity, not that Jesus had infinite knowledge in his brain, that he could use his freedom at the first instant of his conception or his birth, or that the Second Person of the most Holy Trinity was "hypostatically" united with Jesus (to his human nature, according to the strict theological terminology of the churches). All these are the speculations and theories of the churches, to be accepted or rejected according to the prevailing notions and needs of a given historical period. Now Christianity is that religion, or religious experience, based upon those central truths and facts in Christianity. But Churchianity is based upon the sandy and dusty bottom of creeds, dogmas, book-worship, priest-devotion, idolatry, superstition, magic and so forth. Now Christianity will survive the religious crisis of our age, but Churchianity will pass from disease to death, unless they are reformed and re-vitalized from within.

Have we not made the same honest criticism on all other

religions of the world ? For, the popular forms of Hinduism are not Hinduism in the same way as popular Christianity of the churches is not the Christianity of the saints and seers of God in Christendom. Nature-God who decreed that out of the death of a seed the new plant should germinate and grow, out of the pangs of childbirth a new human being should come into existence, out of the evils and errors should emerge the fulness and display of Good and Truth, has also decreed that on the tomb of many of the organised Churches should rise and grow Christianity : Christianity, as an emancipating force in the lives of men and nations. Christianity will become such not by the adaptation of Christianity to the Church-officialdom, but by the ending, mending or sub-ordinating of the whole of Churchianity to the service of Man, to the abidance by the divine truths and Self-realizing principles of Christianity.

Eversince the full use of the right of man to think independently and freely, eversince the rays of rationalism came to the forefront in the modern world, this strait between Christianity and Churchianity has been clearly envisaged by the best minds of the past two or three centuries. A passage we have been seeking between this Scylla and Charybdis. Have we found it ? Or are we on our way to find it ? Let us pause, let us reflect a little, on the history of religions throughout in the past three centuries, not of this or that particular religion, but of all religions of the world and attempt to reply accordingly. I leave the solution of this riddle to the earnestness and sincerity of the hearers.

I can say this much with absolute certainty,—if the term “absolute certainty” could still be used in the world of relativity limiting our knowledge and our existence—that it is due to the opposition that exists between Churchianity and Christianity, as I said above, that I would rather be called a Buddhist than a Christian. Yet, in the heart of my heart, I feel no distinction, much less any opposition, between the unchurched Christianity and the “unlamaized” and “unmahayanized” Buddhism. For in the essentials of all religions there is unity, in the non-essentials there is harmony, and in everything there is all-redeeming love, unfettered liberty, and God-seeing vision. This is the religious outlook my heart fondles upon night and day.

In no other religion I see so much dynamic potentiality to transform the religions of the world into the Religion of Man as in

Christianity. Christianity and Christians are to be the greatest lights and leaders to bring about religious unity of mankind. The history of Europe reveals that great unifying power enshrined therein. Although in certain periods of history, that force lies hidden or buried, it cannot always remain in that static and dormant state. Europe has given many instances of this never-dying vitality and ever-hopeful renovation and re-juvenation. The seeds for this reform and inner transformation are already there, as the sparks and fire lay smouldering underneath the dead ashes and dust, which when removed, fire is freed, which consumes and burns everything, transforming them into its own kind, all-fire.

UNIQUENESS OF THE WESTERN CIVILIZATION

No religion, as it unfolded in history, has so much beneficent dynamism in relieving the sufferings of mankind as Christianity. The great number of our fellow-beings are suffering, and the poignancy and the truth of this suffering are there in their crude and naked form challenging our religious faith.

Now that desire is the cause of suffering and to remedy suffering we must extinguish the *thrishna* or desire and the consuming flames of passion is immaterial to them who have lost consciousness either through moral depravity or long-continued physical illness. The marvellous achievements in the domain of politics, economics, health, sanitary conditions, medicine, industry, means of locomotion and communication, music, art and many other fields of human life are largely boons of the western world, not because of, but inspite of, Churchianity, not inspite of, but because of, Christianity. You argue that it is to ancient Greece, to Rome and the sixteenth century Humanism and Renaissance that we owe all these modern achievements and progressive forces alive in contemporary Europe. Well, thereby you are doing nothing but to identify Christianity with the accepted forms of many organised orthodox Churches, or thereby you are denying the universal and really catholic character of the Christian religion. Now, Christianity is neither Churchianity, nor in any sense a sectarian religion, and hence its ideal and universal character, its divine mission and eternal gospel were proved when it absorbed and assimilated all that was best and lasting in the ancient civilization

of Greece and Rome, and stills learns much from modern culture. It claims world-citizenship of a Christian, not by isolating Christian life from the rest of the world, but by launching it into the fulness of life, into the ever-growing vision of Reality and Truth, and in being and becoming the all-in-allness of God.

If you are tired of hearing the name of Christianity and religion, let us leave these names for the time being, and look at the western world. What a wonderful sight ! Europe has transmitted the war-mongering sickness to the rest of the world, and yet, there is something sublime, something creative, something immortal, in the heart of Europe. Europe, eversince her entry in the history of human civilization, has kept an uninterrupted march, had a decisive say, in many of the world-achievements. Europe destroys ; but she also builds up, and her builders are greater than her destroyers. Europe is earth-minded, and yet she is heavenward-moving. Europe is proud, yet her humility in service exceeds all her sins of pride, arrogance and domineering-instinct. She is great in her lowliness, divine in her humanism, loving in her hatred, poised in her passions. O Europe, where suns of gods and men send their bright, dazzling rays, where health and wealth, power and plenty play their part in full, which by the goddess of ancient Greece is still refreshed and blest, arise ! From your bosom were born great thinkers, artists and religious minds of varying calibres. You still stand as the pioneer of Science and Culture, the foster-mother of many a land and many a people in this planet of ours. You stand even unto this day as the fountain-head of ever-new, ever-fresh, ever-young adventurers. Who can look at your firmament and finish counting the stars of sanctity, resourcefulness, adventurous spirit, free thinking, poetry, mysticism and art of every kind and every description ? Do they not reveal the nature of the leaven whence those spiritual giants and explorers were formed ? Europe ! Ah ! your clime, your races, your countries, your all proclaim to many nations, far and near, that you are of Heaven a gracious daughter, indeed ! Greater the gifts from above, remember, greater the responsibilities weighing on your shoulders.

But did you remain faithful to your mission, O Christian Europe, with a trimillenarian history behind ? You have achieved something when you could have achieved much more. I do mean what I say, because you have forfeited your mission, your vocation,

your trust. You have become self-centered, haughty, jealous, self-conceited, in many ways. Blind priests and reactionary politicians have lorded over your hearts, and you had not the hardihood to follow the footsteps of some of the most inspiring and leading martyrs for Truth, born under your own skies. Do you tell us, peoples of Asia and Africa, that you are bringing us civilization, and that your domination and your exploitation of the physically weaker races, you call on the whole, "beneficial to the coloured peoples" ? History is the judge and judgment of what you have done and what you are professing. The verdict on you is this, 'O Europe, adopted Father-land of some of the enlightened prophets and seers of Asia, of the world, the sentence brought forward against you is this, O Christian Europe, that, in the name of Churchianity you have killed Christianity, which, because it cannot die, has found its abode and throne elsewhere. The paradox is this, that the so-called Christian nations have become anti-Christians, and the so-called pagan lands are become really Christian, and eminently catholic or universal. Do you ignore this fact ? Do you doubt what I am saying ? It is not I alone who indict you, but the best Christians who have gone out to the so-called "Pagan lands", and really found there many among the pagans who are nearer the Gospel ideal than those who claimed to be the legitimate heirs of the sacred, divine, and eternal Christian Gospel. As in the time of Jesus, the so-called and self-styled "chosen people" were cast away from the justice and righteousness of God, and the kingdom of God was handed over to the Gentiles who bore Him fruits and walked according to the Righteousness of God, so shall it be with you today, O Christian West. The Christians will still cling to their Churches and Bibles, their creeds and dogmas, and the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Righteousness will be thriving elsewhere, there where people are branded as pagans, heretics and schismatics and sinners. "Did you never read in the scriptures, the Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner : this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes ? Therefore I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" *

Christianity remains as an immortal religion, as long as its

* Matt. XXI. 42 & 43.

basis remains pure morality touched, or untouched, with emotion. Churchianity is a religious system destined to fall or fade at the first blizzard blowing in the winter, for it is based upon books, dogmas and creeds. If you tell me that books, creeds and dogmas are there to protect the moral teachings of Jesus, you are thereby self-contradicting. Your contradiction is soul-denying, because you do not row us on to the Yonder Shore of Existence on the raft of absolute idealism. Churches, as most of them are today, must die, so that the life of Christianity may sprout out again to enliven "Christian Europe" and, through her, really benefit the whole of this benighted and groping Mankind.

Some one among you may think that to present Jesus as a great moral teacher, and not to recognize him as the incarnation of the Second Person of the most Holy Trinity, is derogatory to the person of Jesus Christ, heretical from the theological view-point, and destructive while considering the weight of the orthodox tradition. Yes, I do not deny that it is against the orthodoxy of the churches; but the more we go away from the orthodoxy of the churches the nearer to the divine truth, revealed by God directly into one's own heart, we reach; which is not only not derogatory to the person of Jesus Christ, but an honour and glory to the Lord of Sacrifice. Certainly, "not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven"*

You do not add an inch to the great personality of Jesus by upholding the dogma of incarnation or that of hypostatic union. You do not add a millimeter more to the greatness of Christianity by parading the entire theological systems of the churches. What, then, is that element which, if removed, the whole of Christianity will fall, which, if restituted, the whole of Christian religion will be restored? That is firstly morality; secondly higher spirituality, thirdly highest mysticism, and fourthly and always Idealism. This, then, is not a unique contribution or privilege of Christianity alone, but it is the corner-stone of all religions, irrespective of whether they are Christian or not.

Christianity, if stripped off the accumulated debris of dead dogmas and creeds, it seems to me, is one of the most beneficent

* Matt. VII. 21.

contributions towards achieving unity of mankind through religions. Dogmas divide, while morality and sanctity unite. Religions must return to the eternal rock-bottom of all religious experience, a holy and unsullied life.

From the strictly moral and spiritual standpoint it will not be difficult to see how Christianity with Christ, as springing from Jesus, is the religion least concerned with what is called orthodoxy, which, to a great extent means nothing but stereotyped formulae. "Jesus wished to force his hearers to interpret his words, because he called them to an inward, personal, autonomous activity, because he wished to put an end to the religion of the letter and of rites, and to found the religion of the spirit", says A. Sabatier.

That is Christianity, and that is the religion of Jesus, and of those Christians who try to become other Christs and other Jesuses. It is to assert this form of Christianity that the Christian mystics have come forward, and, in spite of the Church dogmas and creeds, they have found their way out of the net and prisons which the churches had prepared for them. Is not the history of Christian mysticism an incessant quest of some select souls towards the infinite and eternal Reality, God? If I am asked to put in one sentence all the conclusions which Von Hügel reached after many years of study on Christian mysticism, it is this: "Mysticism is the core of Christian religion, and the core of Christian religion is the unifying link with all other great religions of history, with the religious experiences of all human beings".

Saints and seers of God aspired after the fulness in life, and life in fulness, of their being. There is only one Being; everything else is in a state of becoming and not Being. "The word *Sum*", says Meister Eckhart, "can be spoken by no creature, but by God only; for it becomes the creature to testify of itself '*Non Sum*'." This sense of nothingness of all creation, including the tiny speck of our individual consciousness, was keenly felt and fully experienced by all Godward-moving souls. It is their religion that enabled them to forge ahead, till they found and realized themselves in the life of the Infinite, they themselves becoming one and identified with the Infinite, without which infinitude they could not have possibly found their happiness and rest on earth.

* Outline of Philosophy of Religion, Chapter II.

Are not all that the world can offer or bestow but mere smoke and shadow of something else far greater, of something else for more real, whose messengers are the whole of Creation and everything contained therein ? Are not the objects of our desire and love, that restrict and freeze our inward spirit, so evanescent and flimsy ? With what yearning eyes do we look at a distant object of our love and desire, and yet how unsatisfied at heart and unsatiated in desire we remain, when once the desired object is wedded and won for our hearts ? Tides of passion are not constant, nor the whims and fancies of youth. This sense of transitoriness and perishableness is written large on everything under the sun, and we need something that will not pass away, that cannot fade, that cannot fail. That something is only one, and is none other than your God, your innermost Self, the Real Being of your being, the Heart of your heart, the Soul of your soul, the All of your becoming, the Lord, the Absolute, the One without a second.

Christian mysticism, in a special way, is directed to uplift the society and to benefit the spiritual welfare of our neighbours. There cannot be rest in the heart of a true prophet of God as long as even a single soul is left unredeemed and unenlightened in the ways of the Lord, and the ways leading to God, which are religions. Every prophet of God, every Christian, can quote and say : "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor ; He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord"

Besides the beneficent mysticism and dynamic vitality of the Christian religion, there is another great contribution which Christianity can make towards forming a world-wide God-realizing religion in the world. Christianity is essentially a non-violent religion, like all other great religions of the world ; but, at the same time, it is the most militant of all religions. Only the arms are entirely and exclusively of spiritual and moral character, thereby revealing the greatness of the religion itself. "Of all the necessary things for a man", said Joahnn Tauler, "is to know how to fight and flight always." Every degree of our spiritual evolution necessarily brings with it its own responsibilities on one side, and its own potentialities on the other. Jesus went on struggling against the

* Luke. IV 18, 19

stunting formalities of the Pharisees, against the soul-sickening forms of the legal and codified religions. St. Paul, the greatest of the missionaries, was a militant Christian. Even the meek and mystic saints like St. Bernard and Peter the Hermit, were all militant Christians.

Christianity has a deep appeal to human nature, and Christianity, identified with the doctrine of the Cross or self-sacrifice to achieve one's own Self-realization, is the normal and natural vehicle of human salvation. "The Human soul is naturally Christian", said Tertullian, and we may add: "Natural Christianity is the Religion of Man". The crucifix is the symbol of Christianity, and there shall never come a time when the message that is conveyed by that symbol can ever be obliterated from the face of the earth. The more commodities we create, and the more we shrink from the religion of self-sacrifice, the more distant we go and farther removed from the sky-high ideals which the Religion of Man exhorts Mankind to strive after, for human souls to soar at.

The vital force of Christianity is revealed in the fact that a large part of Christendom has already been emancipated from the soul-deadening tyranny of ultramontaniam in every form, in all its manifestations. The human spirit may be subjugated, but it cannot last long in that state of subjugation. Protestants who broke off from the harassing tyranny of the medieval Rome, created a tyranny worse than that of Catholics themselves. Catholics are Pope-Christians; Protestants are Bible-Christians. Now Christianity has little, or next to nothing, to do either with the Pope or with the Bible, with the result that the church-Christians are running in one way, and the real Christians in another. The more they run, the more divided they become. But we need a meeting point between the Pope-Christians, Bible-Christians, Madonna-Christians, creeds-Christians, militant Christians, non-violent Christians and all sorts of Christians. This meeting point for all Christians must needs be the meeting and mating point of all religious experiences, and of all great religions of the world, God or Self.

My devotion to truth has led me to seek my way of faith and my raft of salvation outside the pale of official Christianity. In spite of everything, in my innermost being I feel an inseparable link with Christianity. How I wish to call and consider myself a Christian when I look at the unique personality of Jesus Christ and the

mystical and truth-seeking currents running almost uninterruptedly all throughout the history of Christianity! But the meaning I attach to Christianity is not in agreement with the Church-orthodoxy, and I do not know how to call myself a Christian, and, at the same time, avoid the equivocation, or 'plurivocation' attached to this name, "Christian and Christianity". But I console myself saying that, after all, it is not the judgment of men, of priests and popes, of bishops and theologians, that we must conform ourselves to, but the living divine truth, inborn and inlaid in the heart of every individual being born of woman, illumined by that "True Light that illumines all men coming into this world."*

But now, I do not care very much about the names and forms, but only about the substance and reality of things. Now, whether the Pope-Christians or Bible-Christians brand me as a heretic, a pagan, or as a man "unworthy of the holy name of a Christian", I do not mind. That is enough if I gain my peace and bliss with the Lord of the universe, towards whom we all hasten, march or run, each in his or her own way. You have your own way and I have mine. Now it is to the judgement of history and to the crucible of free criticism that we gladly leave ourselves to be examined and judged. When you have no other argument for your orthodoxy except the argument "it is written", or "we have a law", or that of the traditional orthodoxy and orthodox tradition, we have our arguments and reasons writ large in the heart of every human being, which could be read and understood without the mediation of either saints in heaven or of the priests and parsons on the earth.

God reveals His truths directly and immediately to each individual soul, and until one hearkens to God's voice and sees His light that shines from within, he is following but the shadow, not the substance of religion. In spite of what the Church-apologists or official theologians may have to say regarding the matter, I humbly claim to be a Christ's Christian, in the most catholic or universal sense of the term. But I do not beg for its recognition from any orthodox or book-bound Christians. Have we not got, each and every one of us, the testimony of our inner light that he is infinitely more powerful, self-sufficient and divine than all the '*consensus generis humani*' bound together? I am a Christian,

* St. John. 1. 9.

but not ceasing to be a Muslim, I am a Muslim but not ceasing to be a Hindu, I am a Hindu but not ceasing to be a Shintoist, and I am all, not ceasing to be everything else. The conviction that the God-realizing element or elements are the self-same in all great religions is so firmly rooted in me, that further study and reflection only deepen, and make that conviction grow stronger in me.

God is All ; All are God. Men through different ways, crooked or straight, book-bound or spirit-free, all are but different roads, leading to one and the same goal.

O God of religious hearts, O sweet music and ineffable vision of our infinite counterpart within, lead us there, where in the unsullied life of self-culture and self-enlightenment, we all may be freed from sin, from misery and mental death.

Sharers and joint-heirs of Thy kingdom make us all, us Hindus, us Muslims, us Christians. us Babaists, us Totemists, us anthropomorphists, us all of the religions of every shade and every clan and every race.

Teach us how to sacrifice our tiny transient self, the root of all selfishness and self-indulgence, which really constitutes sin and nothing else. Cleanse us further, and whiter than snow, brighter than gold, shall our hearts become. Thou art the remover and cleanser of our sins, Thou who freest us, from the prison of our finiteness, and opens the gateway to the boundless and shoreless Sea of Life beyond.

Nothing worthwhile is there besides Thee ; free us from the illusion by which we mistake what is but shadow for substance, the rope for the snake, and mortality for the immortal light beaming from above.

Unite us in love, in sympathy, in harmony ; for these three have no other origin but from thee, to carry us heavenwards, till we have reached our unity and identity with Thee.

Make of religion a uniting, not a dividing, force among Mankind. Build thy eternal city without walls, and make us all but stones and bricks on thy eternal edifice, one with every part, every part one with the Whole, the Lord, the Life, the Light of all.

To that land, Father, lead us all ; and this is our eternal prayer.

When the Poet had finished his inspired lecture, the invitees and the Drummonds sat quiet for some time hypnotized, not only by

the unexpected prosaic, critical and scholarly approach towards Christianity, but more by the powerful personality that was looming behind the words, songs and deeds of the great seer-poet of Hindustan.

A certain John Layard, a well-known psycho-analyst in the city, asked the Poet : How to free Christianity of its evident sectarianism, and make it really catholic ?

Rabindranath :

By wedding Roman Catholicism with Vedanta,
The two most Universal religions of the world ;
Which life-long partnership realized if fully be,
Will make the narrow walls fall and all shackles end.

A Domenican Friar with wider sympathies from the Black-friars at Oxford : Would you then say, Dr. Tagore, that only Roman Catholicism, and not Protestantism, can bring world-catholicity by allying, and "wedding" it—as you say—, with Vedanta ?

Rabindranath : Protestantism has achieved something ; but its isolated individualism saps its roots. I am by nature Catholic, and only Catholicism can save the world, if a bridge is built between the Semitic Dualism and Aryan Monism. The Catholic legacy of Rome should be inested to the trunk of Vedantic universalism. This is my dream, a great Ideal which it is worth striving for. I, for one, has dedicated my life to effect such a bridging mission, for achieving such a catholic ideal.

Rabindranath stayed on in Oxford for two days more, receiving many visitors at Dr. Drummond's garden house, and thereupon he left for Cambridge.

CHAPTER IV

CAMBRIDGE MELODY

"Divine Cambridge where one breathes medieval air,
Centre of Learning, whence came bards, Prophets and
Platonists rare.

To prostrate at your feet have I come from far-off India,
To greet the goddess of Learning, that divine Sophia.
The college towers that rise so high in prayerful form,
With river Cam and the romantic "backs" on either side,
Your narrow streets and lanes contrasting with the King's
Parade,
O Cambridge, with the Kings, St. John's and Trinity,
I salute you."

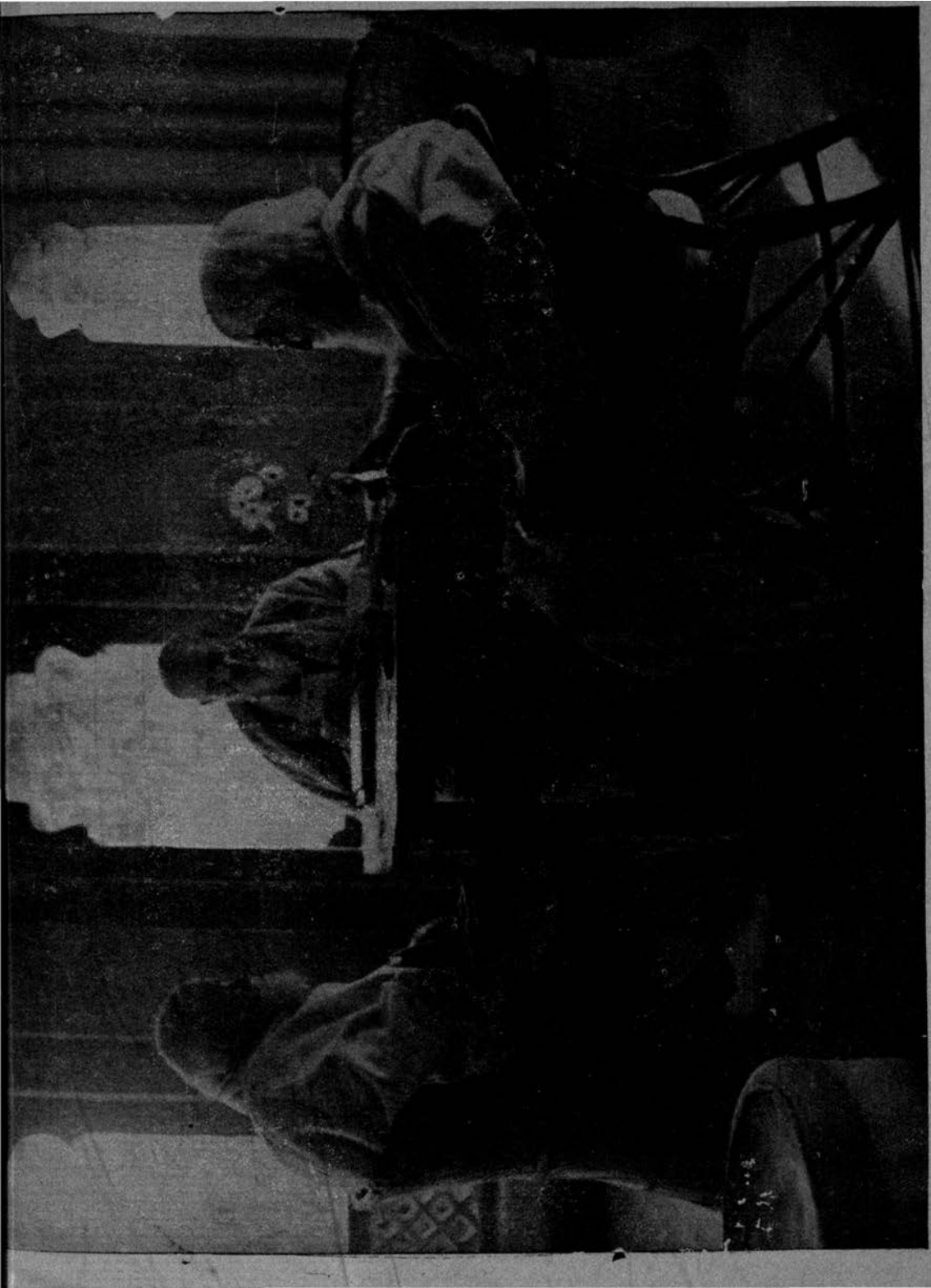
With these greeting words, Rabindranath entered the University city, accompanied by his friends and admirers.

The extensive green spread behind the backs of the Colleges, the wooded lands enriching the University town, the canal and the slow-winding river, gave much inspiration to the Poet. Standing on the Bridge of Sighs, the covered bridge that connects the third and fourth courts of St. John's College, the poet saw young boys and girls courting, lying or sitting on the meadows, young couples paddling and punting on the canal. There were some ladies peeping at the Poet. The clouds were moving swiftly, and the wind was blowing strong. Swans were swimming merrily underneath the bridge, and the Poet sang :

THE DANCE OF THE INFINITE

Why raging monsoon clouds run swift towards me ?
The sea breeze songs I feel here as on a Calcutta terrace,
Several girls in teens are curiously looking here and there,
Some standing on the terrace, some peeping through the windows.
Infinity thrills man through the feminine form,
Her grace and love, her heart and eyes and smile,
Through which the nature-man feels the thrill of infinity.

The sky is wondrously strewn in many colours,
Pigeons are courting, presaging the advent of the spring.
Oh I am enraptured, I am bewitched by Nature, the Mother of all.
New tunes, rhyming verses, sweet music, all spring from within,
Now I sense life everywhere ; the ecstasy of love even in
a grass-blade ;
In pebbles, in this sacred land of Hindustan, in anything,
in everything,
Infinity I sense, infinity I feel, infinity I thirst for, and love
and long to see—
I pant for freedom that is won even in pangs of family ties,
That grows with the growing life of service, solemn, mute,
Which makes one's heart fly, yea, soar aloft, expand, grow
Up to the yonder shores, beyond etereal heavens, to God's
eternal skies.
Let my senses be brought under control, let me grow detached,
Serving every moment thy divine ideal in script and words,
In writing and preaching thy Kingdom, as once Jesus did
in Palestine,
As Buddha in our ancient land, as Socrates in olden Greece.
O make me free to sing thy grace, to strain to march forward.
Conrage give me to forge ahead, even when mountains rise
Of difficulties and trials of life. O let me march onward.
A free bird I am, and freer let me soar to heavenly heights ;
Let not mortal men frighten me, nor impose their authority.
O let me grow in utmost freedom-love, in loving grace,
All the days of my life spending in thy service.
Let creative enterprize be all mine,
Creating my immensity, singing thy song divine.
In this dance of thy creation, one simple grace I have loved
To seek and see, undisturbed peace and growing love
in thy Self, shining within my heart.
Ere the candle of life is extinguished let my wick touch
The flames of the Infinite, and thus reach the shores of Immortality.
In this mortal life ther's nothing but play, display and interplay
Of passions, emotions and instincts of the first-born, which cannot
Bring us light, tranquillity, renewed creative enterprize
O let me stay here days and nights performing my duty ;
Let me walk on razor's edge, and live dangerously every hour.



Ramananda Chatterjee C. F. Andrews Rabindranath Tagore

And from Mara's nets get freed, fully emancipated at heart.
 The enjoyments that from films, phonographs and wireless come,
 The merriments that flow from intoxication with *the elixir vitae*,
 All are flimsy, which puff you up for a moment, and then fade away,
 Which may enthrall your flesh and blood, but soul snatch away.
 Do not by the red lips, nor feminine form, be led astray,
 Nor let the terrestrial enjoyments so clot and clog your mental ray.
 Many-branched are the desires, aims and fancies of the
undisciplined self,

But firm as a rock stands the Self-taught and Self-realised one.
 He looks neither to the right nor to the left, but forward,
 On to the divine target, to the AUM symbol, moving Godward.
 His mind is set firm, heart is straightened up, aims no more forward,
 Looking back to nothing, but straight marching heavenward.
 Renounce, my child, renounce, for in renunciation is bliss.
 To whom shall I run and say, that, not in touching a girl, but in
seeing her

Consists all poetry, love, idealism and ecstasy ? Standing at a
distance,
 Admire the feminine beauty, Mother Nature's thrilling facsimile,
 Clad in modest attire, fondling her baby in her loving arms.
 Approach near her, but mingle not. Touch not the flower lest it
fade away.

Naked form begets sickening delights, but no refined poetry ;
 But modesty, gravity and unsullied feminine love and form,
 Seen, admired at a distance, is the source of heart's rhapsody.
 Romanticism is oft a net to entrap lovers in marriage,
 Ere dreams stop, and harder realities begin ;
 When creative enterprize ceases, and struggle reigns.
 Money, position, political passions, all are vain.
 O shun them, my son, and from those sins refrain
 Which tie you down more and more to earthly existence,
 Clipping your wings, freezing those fine poetic streams,
 Which cheered your younger days and innocent years.
 O renounce, my friend, for in renunciation lies bliss.
 Renounce wealth, fame, family, wife, children, *samsara*,
 For all are to be left behind if you follow Truth Supreme,
 For Truth is One without a Second ; attain it, love it,
 For Truth alone is self-supporting and hence immortal ;

Many highly-placed public men, men of name and fame,
 You have seen with empty brains and lustful hearts.
 With hopes you approached them, disillusioned you returned ;
 So, my son, strive to be that which you expect the Ideal Man to be.
 Coveting and grabbing, even those secret desires
 That, from time to time, spring within the hidden corners
 Of your heart, curb, check, control. Lustful eyes
 Even if you were to be in a lonely spot,
 With a lonely bathing beauty staring at you with love,
 You have to curb, check, control, for purity is the Royal Way.
 Health, youth, time and means are gifts of God.
 Use them all for Self-realisation and service,
 Never, for a moment, for self-indulgence or vanity,
 Which are smoke-screens of *Maya-Devi* and *Mara*,
 Who keep the doors of immortality closed
 To the children of flesh and blood on this earth.
 By God's grace you love and live. He sings the songs
 And you hear. He is the doer and mover of all
 That are good, beautiful, true and lasting,
 As you, or nothingness, is the root of illusion,
 Sin, desire, anxiety, fear, hope and all the rest.
 Deny them all, affirm the godly in you, realise thy self.
 Money cannot give you that inner peace ;
 Beautiful girls can neither give you the real thrill of love ;
 Fame and name, power and authority do not bestow peace ;
 The only way to reach thither is by sacrifice, *tyaga* and *bhakti*.
 As when you are kissed by your most beloved nymph,
 "I" and "Thou" disappears, but only the merging consciousness,
 Of that indefinable something that raises you up, survives,
 Enthralling you up in ecstasy, so, when you have known Reality,
 When you have apprehended Truth, you become light,
 Ingulfed, immersed and enlightened by It, the Absolute ;
 Most Real among the real, most loving among the loves,
 Eternal, Infinite, All-pervading, All-sustaining,
 The Life of our lives, the Soul of our souls,
 Reality behind all appearance, Substance behind all shadows ;
 Ineffable, Unmentionable, Unmanifest and Divine.
 All the Vedas speak about Him ; All Upanishads extoll him ;
 All scriptures of the Semites proclaim Him, all seers see Him,

Knowledge is Life. *Ayidya* is death. Knowledge of Truth is Life.
 Know Him, Love Him, Realise Him, for that is our life's aim.
 Try the path of a millionaire ; of a Venus-hunter,
 Try honestly every nook, every path and know, lest you flounder,
 That besides knowing Him, there's no other way to peace and bliss.
 Religion that survived the test of time and mire of creeds
 Is that of Self-knowledge, self-purification and Self-realisation.
 If you have these three you have all those,
 For the seeds of those blessings manifold are these three.
 Know thy Self, Realise thy Self, and to thine own Self be true.
 But act now, right now when youth and beauty bloom over you ;
 When God's grace and light have dawned upon you in this
 living present, in this Eternal Now. Be free, be free.
 Act from morning to the vespertine bell, act here, act there.
 Sit not idle, for idleness kills yourself and your precious time.
 Killing time with damsels sweet, or picture-shows, with gossips,
 Will not cure your inner pain, the hell of loneliness,
 Which can be cured only when you have known your own Self,
 One and identical with the Self of All, one with this Universe.
 Know Him, follow Him, be like unto Him,
 For He is your Guide and Master, Saviour and Lord,
 Lover and Love, Sweetheart and Beauty adored,
 The source of all that is bright and beautiful,
 Of grand, sublime, idealistic and divine in you and me.
 Act in your youth ; experiment with life in infinite way
 And choose your path, the path of freedom and bliss.
 Work now ere it becomes too late, when the sun has gone down,
 When pitch darkness will brood over your life.
 Wake up, my soul, wake up. Act, my friend, act, now,
 right now, in this glorious, divine Now.

To the question put to the poet : "what is life?" there came straight the following answer :

LIFE IS AN ETERNAL THRILL

From the dead dogmas and mental gymnastics I am freed ;
 I begin to glimpse into the living verities of a divine creed ;

Looking beyond the veil ; sharing the vibration of infinite bliss,
 In heart-enrapturing thrill, which, with thy grace, I shall nev'r
more miss.

God lives and struggles, loves and hates through His creation ;
 Yet the entire creation with love and hate is never God.
 God lives and works in and through this vast universe ;
 Yet the universe is neither God nor His remote essence.
 I am part of Life, this shoreless Ocean of Existence.
 God's thrill one feels through flowers, children, girls,
 Through mountains and blue skies, rising sun and smiling moon,
 Blue waters of the sea, in everything underneath the crescent.
 The goal of life is now unto me revealed ; It's thrill ; It's poetry.
 But *Brahmacharya* is the only way to the Brahman-Bliss.
 Purity is the only way to enjoy the thrill of creation,
 To penetrate behind the smile of tender girls, innocent angels,
 To be kept raised beyond the woes and miseries of life.
 My heart is too big to be imprisoned within marital bonds ;
 My body is too sacred a temple to be polluted by lustful deeds ;
 My link with the Universe is too strong to be lured by lust,
 To be dragged down again to earth, in mere sexual intercourse.
 O I shall keep my heart pure, unsullied, through thy power,
 Thy grace, the living God of my throbbing heart. Make me pure !
 In my universal love I shall embrace and enfold all ;
 Not the smashing beauty of a rare blond ; a sweet girl by my side,
 Not the wealthy, healthy and the learned alone ; but the poor,
 The lonely and the lost too ; their worries and woes are mine also.
 I am in them ; they are in me, in this developed stage of
cosmic consciousness.

Without this thrill of life, living Reality of God in values,
 Life loses its charm ; its poetry, not in the least worth living.
 Infinity manifests and reveals in and through the finite beings,
 Through the love and grace of women, through the thought
and power of men.

Water, monsoon, struggles and wars, art and poetry and
civilisation,
 Rocks and mountains too are become life in th'Ocean of Life Divine.
 In this eternal thrill, which is the climax of perfection,
 Lies the road to immortal bliss and timeless age, for all time
to come.

AFFIRM LIFE, AFFIRM PERSONALITY

One patriotic Indian student said : My Tagore, Asia's
greatest living poet, fountain of my inspiration, you have said :

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation,
I feel the embrace of freedom in thousand bonds of delight.
No, I will never shut the doors of my senses,
The delight of sight and hearing and touch will be thy delight.
Millions of living beings make up the vast fair of this world,
And you ignore it as all as a child's play".

The Poet :

In multitude of my sins and sufferings, in miseries and woes,
I'll affirm life, my God. Let me affirm my personality and grow !
In every corner of this world, every mortal being on earth,
Lives in his or her little heaven or hell, his or her tiny self,
Which fulfils or empties away the fountain of Life within.

Many are my transgressions of thy moral law, my Lord,
Remember not those dark years of my youthful ignorance.
Wild passion flames have my real light extinguished ;
My real strength is destroyed by the destruction of my Self.
But thou, the Self of this universe, wash me again from my filth,
And raise me up again to thy divine contemplation, which I've lost.
Thou and I, I and thou, my God, and let there be no
intermediary in between.

O let the Church officials be gone and let me live and die free.
Take thou me in thy arms, hold me ever close to Thee,
My Comrade and Saviour, Life and Light and Path for me.

I am frail ; my resolutions are likewise weak, my God,
I resolve today and fall into the ditch again tomorrow,
O save me, my Saviour. Redeem me, my Redeemer-God.
Let my mind and heart be firmly fixed in Thee,
And leave the evil of mortality once for all.

A watchdog I should hence keep at the door of my heart,
So that nothing outside Thee may enter the sacred precincts,
Where is thy throne, where is the flower-garden of the Most High.
Heart of my heart, Love of my love, Soul of my soul, hold me
close to Thee.

In sleep and in work, in trials and tribulations,
 Even when I am prostrate, crushed by the weight of sins,
 Let me never lose hope, hope in Thee, my Almighty God.
 Hold me, I beseech, hold me close to you, close to you today,
close to you for ever.

Don't run away, my soul, From God's battlefield,
 From His garden where thorns and thistles likewise grow.
 Face them, struggle in life, and win the palm of victory.
 Life-denial is not for you, my gentle soul, my friend,
 But after seeing God, back to life you come, there fight, there
fighting die.
 Be a hero in this struggle, my friend, shrink not, for it 's God's
own war you wage in life.

When your limbs grow weak after repeated efforts and duels,
 When th' ennui of life still haunts you from every side,
 Remember those blessed moments when God shone real to you,
 Get cheered, my son, my daughter, be then up, be doing, fight and
win the palm of life.

Act, my son, Act. Never mind, even if you fail or fall,
 Weep not ov'r your follies past, but look and hope ahead.
 Life, if dark to you, remember, thyself art the reason why ;
 Awake, then, my son, pray God, struggle on, ere the life is spent.

Position, money, pleasures, if you seek, you will find,
 But let your heart, my son, yearn, pine and sigh after Infinity.
 Return, my wounded dove, back to the source of life and light,
 Back to God and God-realized action in life. Fail not, march
 In this life, be a valiant fighter, wrestle, whistle, pray, work,
 Day in and day out, from dawn to dusk, from dusk to dawn.
 Even when thy eyelids close, let thy heart dwell on Him
 On whom depend you and this Universe. This is the secret of Life.
 No other way is found. Go ahead, my son, go ahead.
 Wait not for the wind, but sow, for the time is short.
 Mortal frames end in death ; beware of your enemies in life.
 Awake, my soul, awake, and win the palm of life.

Pros and cons are everywhere ; decide, then, your way, my son ;
 And stop not for a minute to count your loss or gain,
 Nor stoop before the mighty men ; and keep your heart brave,
in tact.

Desires of the heart are manifold, bear with them ;
 Suppress them and look to the yonder sky up above,
 Breathe infinity and grow the wings of freedom and soar.
 Habit is stronger than nature ; break through it,
 Let all the shackles fall away ; and you reach Infinity,
 Time redeem, for eternity pends on time, my son.
 Act, brave, my friend, act, brave, do now, right now,
 In this living present, with a stout heart within,
 And God almighty overhead. March, my friend, march, march on.
 The battle cry is heard and I want you to array
 With those brave saintly forces everywhere and redeem thy soul,
 Use thy God-given talents, hide them not under a bushel dark.
 Let your tiny self be crushed, look, my dear, unto infinity,
 Purify thy heart from sexual fire, by the rays of divine light,
 By Self-realised vision and continued aspiration towards th' Infinite.
 Days, months and year roll, choose, my friend, choose your way,
 Be brave ; but humiliate yourself unto the level of dust and clay,
 For in lowliness lie and live saints of God.
 Now, let my soul depart hence in peace,
 For the thrill of infinity I felt through every creature,
 Through meadows and maids, through green grass and blue skies.
 Let the loadstar shed its brilliant light ; let the smoking waters
 Of the South Pole, with eels and canine furs, raise me up
 To glimpse into the Yonder Shore of Existence,
 Which I have longed to reach and sighed to touch,
 Where let me reach, there let me live for all eternity.

To the question : "What is love—what is lust" ? by two
 young students, the Poet answered :

LOVE AND LUST

The wages of sin we reap in our body, mind and soul,
 We fall sick, we suffer and agonize : yet, we continue to sin.
 O this sad necessity of sin ! This burning fire within mortal man !
 Who can free me from the burning flames of lust ?
 Miserable and mortal man that I am !
 In thy mercy I have hoped, this miserable creature that I am,
 O save me from death that is engendered by lustful self,

Keep off, for there is hell, death, mortality, all combined
in her enticing trap.

In her special dress and perfume, her rich bed and ointments.

Let love grow and flourish, but let lust be crushed.

Sexual union, carnal touch and burning desires and foul look,

Those rolling waves of passions within human heart,

Are to be calmed down, curbed, stilled, with the dart

Of Love divine, of poetic rapture, of romantic glow.

Sex is the source of life and death, of love and hatred ;

For, the animalish side is ugly, which our minds beclouds,

Will-power deadens, moral force weakens and kills.

But not so, my dear, that look on innocent lips,

Red, pure, and virgin of playing children and innocent girls,

Which like a magical touch your heart transplants

To the land of bliss, to the third heaven rapt.

Your love, inclination towards girls and women, is universal.

So enjoy them all, by killing lust, without ever touching them,

Nor looking at them with burning desire, with emotions wild,

Which dwarfs your stature and your dignity degrades.

In the heart of heart, with sense keen and delicate love,

You long to embrace and love every sweet angel you see or

dream about.

But physical impossibility is there and wearing away of senses too,

Not to speak of moral conventions and other walls

That keep you off from every girl except your own wife,

Or, in a degraded society, those public vessels reserved for man's

lust to feed, woman's penury to remedy,

Those strumpets who sell themselves to lust and mammon both.

Have you not seen, my friend, that only those who renounced touch,

Enjoyed Beauty and Love throughout their life live true, survive ?

Hence th' Isopanishad says : "*Tena tyaktena Bhunchitha*",

Better than which a golden norm you will never find anywhere.

This will convince you, my soul, that never to mountain tops

you will have to fly,

For Self-realization and God-consciousness to achieve.

All transformation should take place from within your heart,

Which alone is the source of hell and heaven, misery and

blessedness.

This universe exists only to your consciousness at various levels.

The development of the right consciousness is poetry and bliss.
Enjoy, then, God's creation to your full, but by renouncing them,
never touching, nor spoiling the flowers in God's garden.

Man has sex, but woman is sex. She is *Samsara*, the world !
 Woman is flesh, woman is matter, woman is earth of the earth,
 The fallen Eve, whose grace deceived the man, Adam of old. .
 Woman is the origin, the middle and end of the first-born beings.
 But she is innocent in her charm, in her fascinating looks.
 Nature has so ordered that woman may prevail over man,
 That matter may dominate over the spirit, so that life may persist.
 Or else humanity would cease to be. She keeps life going ;
 The wheels of existence rolling, through her charm and grace.
 Woman, by nature, is Mother ; she is Nature, the Universal

Mother of all.

She does not deceive ; but man by lack of thought is led to fall
Into the dungeon pit of lustfulness, with desires set ablaze.
Woman seeks not man but for a babe, or for her bread, or both ;
 man seeks not woman but for pleasures keen ;
The woman builds her home, her nest and hence, conservative
 she remains.

But man destroys, dissipates. He is spirit, a perpetual dreamer he. Only by philosophic insight can one be freed from the snare she is. Prolonged kiss, fond embrace, those loving, passionate staring eyes, All wear away the vigour of man, his manliness, divine vitality. Contact with women softens man, tames the wild best into meek lamb.

Without knowing woman, in normal course, man knows little
about the mysteries implicit in life.
Hence priests and nuns are oft devoid of experience, understanding.
Everything is fleeting, name, honour, love of woman, her red
lips and blossoming breast :
Literary fame, political power, empires, men, all, all wither
away with the passing blast.

No permanent city we have underneath the sun ; passeth away
the charm, thrill and glory of this world.
Seek ye, then, children of immortal Bliss, the Love that permeates
And keeps you safe and bright throughout all eternity.
Good is one thing ; pleasant is another. Chosing the pleasant
you miss the aim in life.

Woman, for the first-born, is pleasure, specially in the prime of
youth,
And, she dresses up, lip-sticks and perfumes her hair, face and all
To make you bend your knees, and adore that queen of Creation.
Stand you, my soul, mind and heart socked, drowned in the sea
of Divine Love and Life,
Prostrate before the Infinite and the Eternal, that is alive through
every creature and sail along.
With downcast eyes, folded hands, kneel down before the Almighty,
And say and pray : Lord, keep me safe from impurity, from all sins,
and make my tiny barge reach safely to thy eternal shores.

KILL LUST BY THOUGHT

When everything around you is burning,
When all pass through the jaws of death, mourning
Th' unhappy lot, blaming destiny or fate
Run not away from life, betaking to solitude, but state
Your faith clear, embrace the way of cross,
Choose the path of thorns, cleansing your mental dross.
Sex-lust, attachment and the prison of desire,
By constant watch and discrimination and will-force
Win. Where faith is lacking and vision beclouds
There man sinks and stoops before self-sex-desire-life.
None sees God nor leads a divine life,
Ere complete Brahmacharya is reached.
Sex weakens and fades away when fuel is denied ;
When desires are curbed, and one clings firm
To those truths once seen, acknowledged and learnt as true,
Without doubt in mind, without weakness of will.
Go beyond the moral laws, but without infringing them,
For none attains God-realm but through moral perfection.
If one hearkens to the inner voice, no book,
No external authority nor guide are needed any more.
No, march ahead towards the land of Eternal Life.
But if weak you feel, then to a *guru*, or church entrust yourself.
Truly repentent person will never his misdeeds repeat,
None falls into pits as long as faith and vision last,
With a will to affirm values in life, a clear vision,
With meditation, prayer and constant vigilance.

Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom,
 The only safe-conduct to God's Kingdom.
 In moments of darkness, agitation and trial,
 The best course is to enter a solitary room or place,
 Prostrate before the Almighty and pray from the heart.
 Light will surely come and comfort too,
 When real devotion we have and heart-felt prayer to God.
 "Lust and Love are deadly enemies," says great Shakspeare,
 For lust is darkness, Love is Light. Know this, my son, hear.

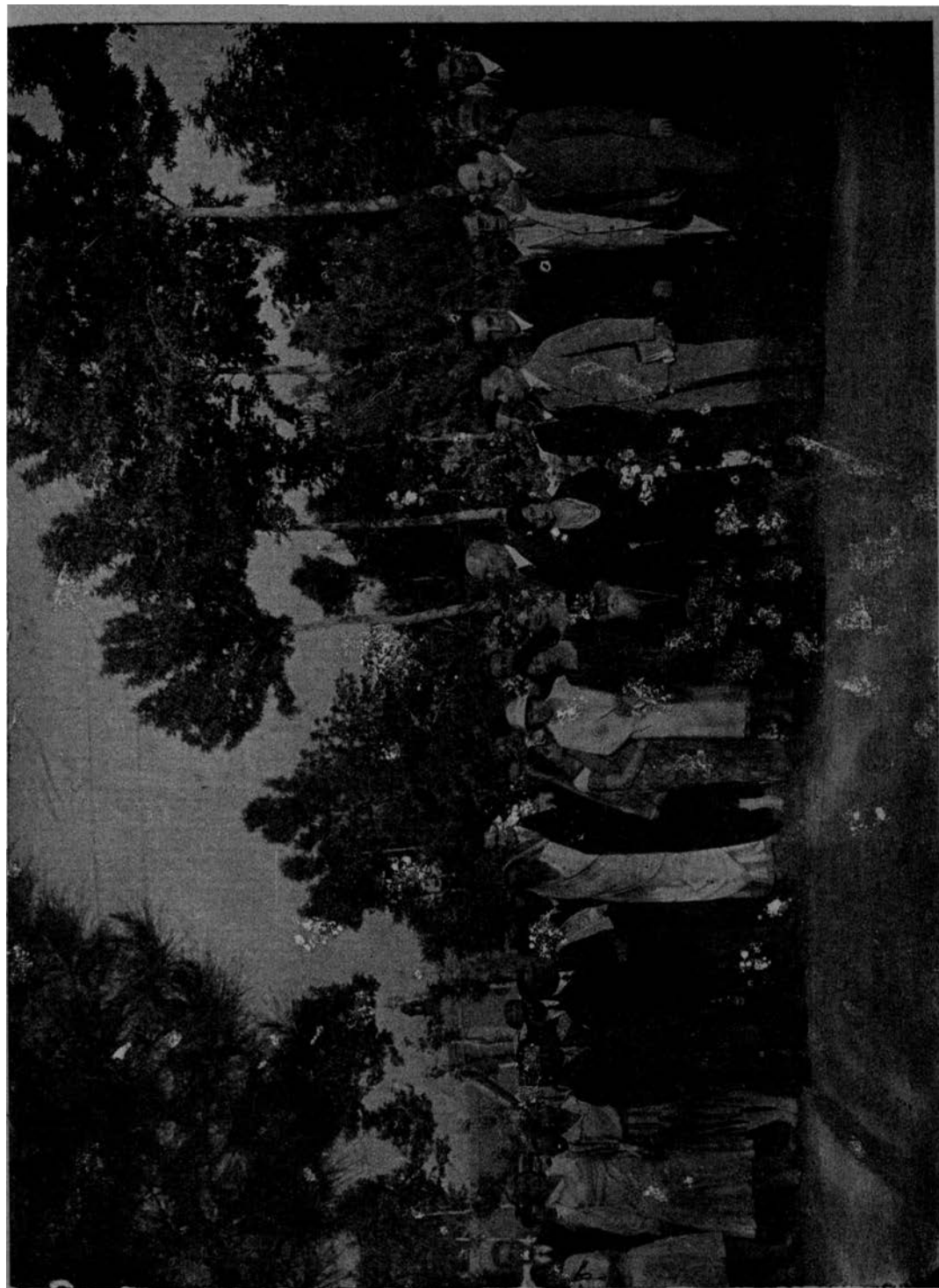
PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION, AND ART

A Polish Artist, an Italian musician, and a disciple of the the Poet, William Butler Yeats, approached Rabindranath to discuss with him on Art, Music and Poetry. After visiting King's College chapel, they sat on a bench, and talked together for a long time.

Art, Music, Poetry, Philosophy and Religion, according to Rabindranath, are essentially creations of the self-conscious mind, attempting to express itself objectively. Creation is an attribute of God Himself, and hence only divine persons can be original artists, musicians, poets, philosophers and prophets. From the days of Thucydides, poets, bards and artists were complained of for distorting facts and figures of history. History, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Ornithology, Thermodynamics etc. are objective sciences. A historian cannot create ; a scientist cannot create. They are creatures of God, who unfolds himself in the mind, heart, imagination, emotions and works of an artist, poet, philosopher or a prophet.

It is in these creative fields of human activity that the bridge between subjective consciousness and objective positivism is built, the synthesis is found between the thesis of ego-consciousness and the antithesis of non-ego-consciousness. It is these bridge-builders who continue to shine as the light of the world and the salt of the earth. If you leave this world in the hands of pure scientists, positivists and facts-and-figures-experts, human spirit will be suffocated and mankind will cease to be.

The Polish artist, Jan Malinowski : Were not men like Raffælo, Giotto and Michelangelo, indeed, divine men, whose work



Rabindranath at Teheran

still enthrall and inspire men and women. In architecture, painting and sculpture, those artists have become immortal gods.

The Italian musician, Signor Benedetto Rossi : And musicians like Wagner, Schubert, Bach, Handel, Beethoven, Rossini, Verdi and others are also divine men.

The disciple of W. B. Yeats, Mr. George MacManus : And do not forget to include, Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Pindar among the Greeks, Virgil, Ovid and Horatius among the Latins, Dante, Patrarca and Ariosto, Foscolo and Leopardi among the Italians, Goethe, Schiller, Heine and Korner in Germany, Corneille, Lamertine, Victor Hugo and Coppée in France, and Shakespeare, Pope, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Swinburne, Tennyson and Longfellow among your divine men.

But here in Rabindranath Tagore we have the epitome of Art, Music, Poetry, Philosophy and Religion, harmoniously blended in one single personality. When I was last at Santiniketan with my friend Guiseppe Tucci, whom the Fascist Government sent to India to study Indian languages and Indian civilization, I became fully convinced that you, Rabindranath, are the real master-mind who constitute the link between the East and the West, and the noblest artist-musician-poet-philosopher-seer of this century.

When I was last in Calcutta somebody told me that you were but a rich *zamindar* in your youth. But the dynamic apostolate of Neo-Vedantism carried on by Vivekananda aroused you from juvenile poems into the vocation of a seer-prophet, a worthy son of Debendranath, whom the people used to call, "Maharshi".

Rabindranath : Something alive and dynamically divine have always held me close to Nature and Self. But Vivekananda's fire touched me deeply, and it burnt down the remnants of egotistic poetry in me. Swamiji lived fire, spoke fire, wrote fire. In such a short span of life he shook the world, notably India, America and Europe. He was a prophet, like his great Master, Ramakrishna Paramahansa. But both were creators, for, prophetism, idealist apostolate, art, music, all are realities of the human spirit, creations of subjective consciousness, trying to express itself objectively.

Malinowski : Did not many Bengalees hold Ramakrishna as a mad man ? How the common people always misunderstand the originality, prophetism and creative genius of those supermen who hold the torch of divine truth in history !

Rabindranath : All original thinkers, poets, artists, and prophets were considered by the common man as mad beings. Christ was called a mad man by his fellow-countrymen. But this divine madness is worth having, for manifold are the blessings showered upon mankind by such creative madness of an artist, poet or a prophet. Says Plato : "The greatest blessings we have spring from madness, when granted by divine bounty. For the prophetess at Delphi, and the priestess at Dodona, have, when mad, done many and noble services for Greece, both privately and publicly, but in their sober senses little or nothing. And if we are to speak of the Sybil and others, who employing prophetic inspiration, have correctly predicted many things to many persons with regard to things of the future". Regarding the madness of poets, Plato continues : "There is a third possession of madness proceeding from the Muses, which seizing upon a tender and chaste soul, and rousing and inspiring it to the composition of odes and other species of poetry, by adorning the countless deeds of antiquity, instructs posterity. But he who without the madness of the Muses approaches the gates of poesy under the persuasion that by means of art he can become an efficient poet, both himself fails in his purpose, and his poetry, being that of a sane man, is thrown into the shade by the poetry of such as are mad".*

A poet does not become subservient to grammar, diction, to the regulations of syllabification and metre. He just creates words and rules for himself, which is not merely poetic license, but it is the demand of the inner creativity of a mind touched by the Infinite, within him and outside Him, and with which he becomes one, when he really produces his poetry, his art, his music. He is elevated far beyond the common fold, and there he dwells in a rapture, in an ecstasy, which the men of pure flesh and blood cannot even dream to reach or experience.

A poet, musician or an artist, a real philosopher and an inspired prophet, experiences human truths vividly, and becomes one with the Moral Force that is behind the phenomenal existence. The dawn, the sky, the mountains, rivers, seas, children and their smile, the rains and the clouds, the sun, moon and the stars are worlds to them. Life to them is a vivid, thrilling experience. When they become agents of God, in singing songs, in composing

* Plato, Phaedrus.

verses, in raising monuments of artistic creation, or while spreading the glad tidings of redemption, they are raised so aloft, beyond the common folk, that only by condescending they work underneath the sun, just to serve the suffering mankind, benighted and groping in darkness. They constitute poets and prophets of God.

They become free, and the real and eternal *swaraj* is theirs. Calm, meditative, intuitionist, passionate and emotional, their entire personality is integrated. They are the supermen, the real and lasting benefactors of humanity. Their glory will never perish ; it grows fresher and greater as the centuries pass by. Such are the supermen like Plato, Laotze ; Confutze, Buddha, Asoka, Aristides, Socrates and a host of others. Such are in modern India men like Ram Mohun Roy, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Mahatmaji. Empires may rise and fall, but those supermen go on for ever. Their laurels never fade.

Signor Rossi : I feel that genius is inborn in our blood. The Aryan blood is essentially creative ; whereas the Semetic is destructive, as the Mongolian is imitative. Anything that is really a landmark in the history of human civilization, that is the creation of the Aryan race. Anti-Semitism in Russia, Europe and elsewhere is not only due to the economic domination of the Jews, but it is also due to the destructive blood of the Semites, specially of those who belong to the Jewish and Arabic races.

Rabindranath : Was not Jesus Christ a Jew of the Jews, a Semite of the Semites ? And yet is he not still one of the great lighthouses for humanity ? He has rightly said : "I am the way, life and truth," whose echo is heard also in our Gita.

Rossi : It's most likely that Christ had Roman blood in him. His father might have been a Roman soldier, as Mary was already pregnant before she was received by Joseph. Of course, faith ascribes the impregnation of Mary to the Holy Spirit. According to many critics, Jesus spent many years in the Buddhist countries. Even to this day there is a tomb in Kashmir which is believed to be the tomb of Jesus. He studied Indian Philosophy and Buddhist Way, which, amalgamated with his maternal Semitic ancestry, and with his creative and angelic intellect, enabled him to deliver one of the finest messages of salvation to mankind. Alfred Loisy, one of the most progressive Catholic critics, has stated that Jesus did not die on the cross. It is not improbable that

Jesus withdrew again to India, the classical land of perennial philosophy and religion, and expired on the beauty-hills of Asvagosha's Kashmir, or somewhere not identified as yet.

Rabindranath : I am not an expert. But virgin birth is not a contradiction in terms. As ordinary men are born of *libido*, so it is not unlikely that some eminent supermen and *avatars* be born of pure grace. More so in the case of Jesus. It is remarkable that the religion of a crucified man, with fishermen as his disciples, could spread far and wide and dominate over the people of the Aryan races for millennia. There is something divine and lofty about the Christian gospels, the history of the persecutions and the spread of Christianity, at least, during the first three centuries. Jesus Christ bridged the East and the West.

Rossi : That is the sweet musings of a poet ; but not a historical fact. The trouble in Europe is that the Jewish toxin and religious fanaticism are injected into an entirely uncongenial blood of the European races, where most of them are Aryans. The Church is Semitic in spirit, whereas Aryan blood runs through Europe's veins. The Churches destroyed the fluidity and creativity of the Greek mind and Roman Law, crippled and stunted its growth and spontaneity of life. In paganism there is catholicity, receptivity, fluidity and creativity, which are lacking in the Semitic Churches. Only, I ardently hope that India, still the lighthouse of creative, assimilative and receptive philosophy and religion, be not destroyed by the invasion of Christian missionaries in your lands.

Rabindranath : That can only happen in a moment of oblivion or degeneration. I do not think that Indians, the Chinese or the peoples of the East, will be so sluggish as to be swept away by the missionaries. I fully agree with you that the spirit of the ancient Aryan Civilization is completely different from the Church forms of Christianity and all the Semitic religions. I have often said that I love India, not because I foster the cult of geography, but because she has given me the words of living wisdom, springing from the enlightened consciousness of her rishis. She taught me : "*Satyam, Jnanam, anandam Brahma ; santam, sivam, advaitam—*Brahman is truth, knowledge, bliss ; Brahman is peace, goodness and oneness".

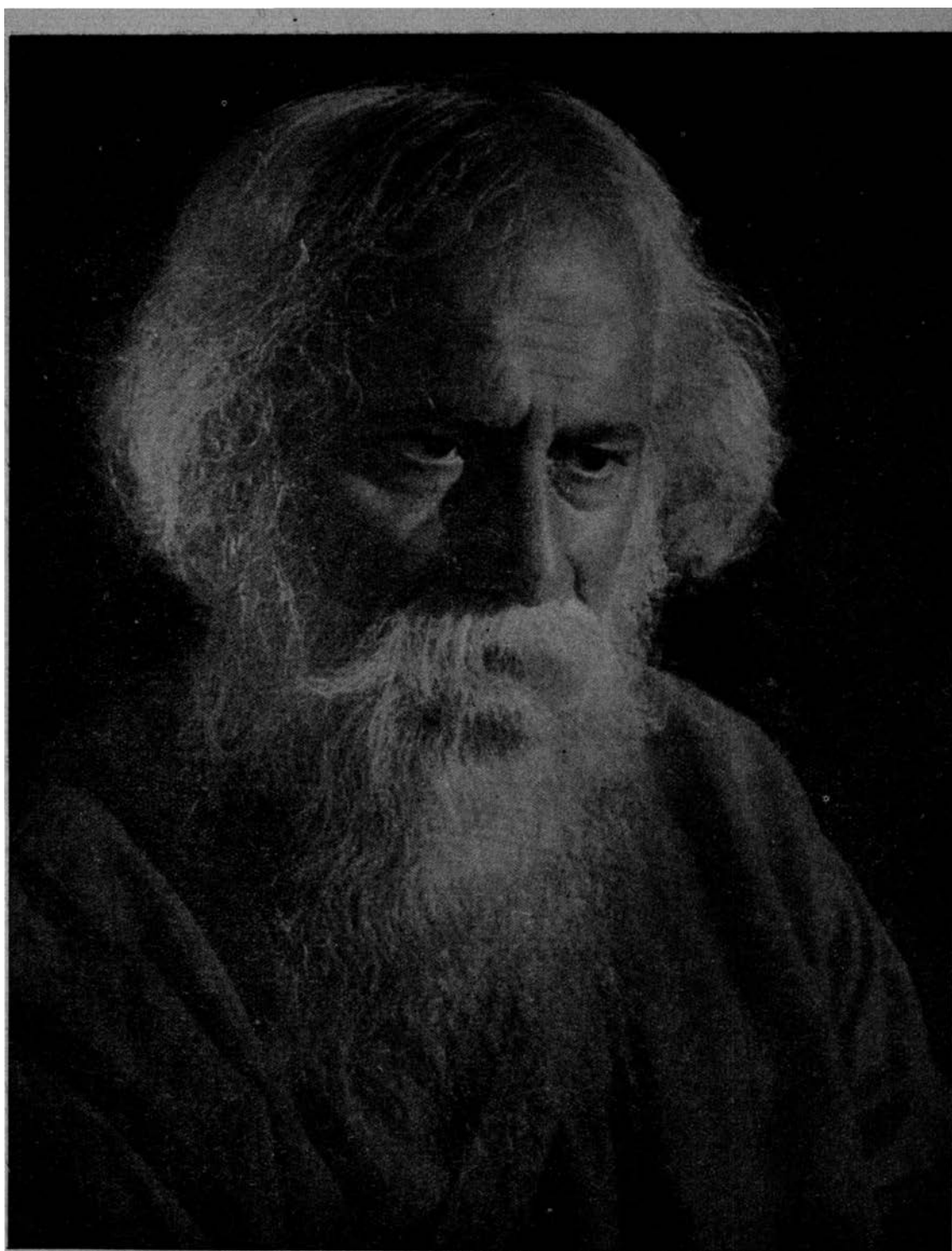
George MacManus : You know, my dear Rabindranath, how, much I owe to Indian culture and Indian scriptures. As Schopen-

hauer has said, they have been the continuous inspiration for my life, and, I hope, the only consolation at the hour of my death. In them I see Philosophy, Poetry and Love of the highest type. It will sound the death-knell of Indian nation, if that unhappy day dawns, when, dazzled by the material civilization of the West, Indians forget or set aside their own scriptural lore and pearls. In Gita, I see the synthesis of the loftiest philosophy and religion ever reached by mankind for the attainment of the highest form of Self-realisation. That one single book is perhaps worth more than the scriptures of all the Semitic religions, I mean of the Jews, Christians and Muslims, all put together. What, then, shall I say of the Vedas ? Of the Vedanta ? Of the Yoga ? O Divine India !

Rabindranath : But you must embrace both East and West. It is the Western scholars who unearthed the priceless gems of the Sacred Scriptures of the East. It is the West that gave us modern ideals of Democracy, that taught us Science and higher criticism. Much human misery is relieved by western medicine, hospital and nursing system. I strongly feel we need the head of the East and the limbs of the West, which should be integrated on the trunk of common man. Let there be no longer East and West, but only Humanity. I salute the advent of the Universal Man.

At that time a number of students, both boys and girls, approached Rabindranath, and began to ask questions. The questions were not orderly put ; and many youngsters did not even keep the decorum, as most of them only wanted to boast, later on, that they had spoken with Rabindranath Tagore, the Poet of India, of Asia, of the world.

The students squatted on the grassy pavements turning towards the "Backs" of the colleges. One after another, patiently and sweetly the Poet-Seer answered their questions. No stenographer was there to take down accurately the words of deep wisdom which flew from his lips ; a stream of poetic flow which, if faithfully recorded, would have contributed more than a mite to the national resurrection of India and the unification of the world, based on the Catholic Man.



Rabindranath in his 70th Year

And know that freedom and slavery spring from you ;
 From you alone, my son. God Himself can not bind you down,
 Much less His creation. So be strong in this battlefield ;
 Affirm your Self-realised life. Seek redemption within you ;
 God and His kingdom lie within you ; for, this is the psalm of life.

FOLLOW NATURE

Th' infallible guide for man is Nature, th' Universal Mother,
 Benevolent, soothing, loving, fondling nurse. Near and dear
 Is she. Follow her and you'll nev'r go astray,
 Your past sins will be cleansed and a new ray
 Will beam forth showing you the way unto eternity.
 She heals and cures you maladies, which out of stupidity,
 Wanton pleasure-hunt and heart-inebriation,
 Want of self-control and roving senses' rage
 Have wrought upon you, emptying out the divine image.
 Calm and still is the whispering of the Nature-God
 Who comes to you when you are left to yourself ;
 When passion-emotion-waves cease and solitude reigns.
 O grand are those moments when God's thrilling voice one hears ;
 Blessed that spot where infinity reveals in a living way ;
 When the meaning of our existence is revealed ;
 Passion clouds and ripples are removed, and the soul shines
 In its primitive splendour, in its natural sunshine.
 I know the pleasures of senses wear away my being ;
 They make me old without age ; they shake and stunt
 The inner core of my being. Wrinkles appear before 'the age ;
 Memory is lost, will-power is slackened ; mind clouded.
 Fear, trembling, duplicity, haunt me from every side,
 When I have eloped away from Nature-God, my Mother-Nature.
 Politics is meaningless when Self remains unearthed,
 Not analysed, until the compass needle turns Northwards,
 Th' eternal North of the soul, God, Reality, living Love.
 Nature-cure clinics do wondrous healings,
 Which homeopathy and alopathic stores fail to cure.
 Tuberculosis is healed by right breathing ;
 Syphilis by progressively purifying thoughts and heart.
 One who abides by moral law is under its protection ;

Evils fly off from a righteous man ; his one single aim
 Being that of fulfilling the will of Nature-God.
 Protection which Nature gives and Moral Law
 Is safer than the pistols and human prudence steps.
 Live under her safe anchorage, my son. Abide by moral Law ;
 Become part of that machine which is Nature, which is Moral Law.
 Discipline your heart, seek relaxation, salvation and peace,
 Within your Self, not outside, in your deepest Self, my son.

LIVE NATURAL LIFE

Naturalism, humanism, idealism, romanticism are all I need in life.
 Why priests and maulavis, with your supernaturalism, bring in strife
 Amidst the mortal men ? Read Rudyard Kipling's Jungle Book
 And know that Nature is the Universal Mother of all. Why look
 With a contemptuous smile on the heathen and fire-worshipper,
 If he and you, through different roads, are marching towards
 the same goal ?

Nature is wider than your bottled theology. Look at the stars.
 Count them if you can. Yet what are they in this Universe ?
 In this infinity in which you and I are lost ? India's mountains,
 Her jungles and rivers, her soil and skies to us are not profane,
 But sacred, all pregnant with an infinite sense, lofty, divine,
 Nearer Nature we are, nearer this universal Mother we would live.
 Living nearer Nature heals all diseases of body, mind and soul ;
 It gives back lost vigour to the sin-eaten physique, lost in luxury.
 Man's "civilization" has brought him nearer death than to life ;
 For, farther and farther away he has journeyed along the way of
 self-conceit and Lucifer's pride.

In those wild and green jungles there live tigers, wolves, lions,
 Panthers, reindeers and buffalos, jackals, elephants, pythons,
 All those infinite varieties of plants and birds and animals,
 God's infinity of Creation, dancing and thriving nearer Nature dear.
 There the three city-robbers went, and for lure of coins,
 For greed and lust, one killed the other, until Nemesis visited them.
 Not a thought passes across our mind, not a single imagination,
 Which does not emit its vibrations, and influence us for either
 good or bad. Know this truth.
Karma law reigns supreme, for as a man sows, so he reaps in this
 world and in the next.

Breathe fresh air with open lungs, through which fresh draughts of
divine life are inhaled ;
Hold your head erect, and be the slave of none, be he the
mightiest monarch on earth.
The most fascinating girl with infinite charms, or be it
mounts of gold.
Be firm, reach nearer Nature, hide within her mantle, for she is All.
Worship the rising sun, greet the down-going moon behind the
red virginal veils up above, in the West.
Respect fire, water, the five elements and attribute living divinity
To everything, everywhere, for omnipresent all-in-all is He.

NEW BIRTH, NEW LIFE

Regarding the life of the twice-born, the Poet sang :—
 Replete is my soul with grace divine
 Inspiring me to write this uncouth line,
 And sing aloud unto all generations,
 The lyrics of His love and commiseration.
 Human body is diaphanous, receptacle of both light and darkness,
 In a moment the vehicle of divine grace, vessel of corruption,
 Instrument of moral degradation, at other times.
 Temple of Christ now, meretricious limb at other times.
 Moral law is tangible, palpable, more really than physical laws ;
 For spirituality is more real than the sense-bound world.
 The Semitic life-affirming races insisted more on moral laws,
 To aid a mortal man to reach the Yonder Shore of Existence.
 But the subtle Aryan intellect saw clearer the Spiritual Reality.
 Their ethereal metaphysical mind went for beyond good and evil
 And dwelt there where Sat-Chit-Ananda shines and lives.
 In their vision they said : “Many a birth and death have I passed.
 Now for me death and birth are over, for Reality have I seen .
 Freed now I am from the jaws of Death through the magic wand of
Jnana-Bhakti, knowledge-love.
 Th’ Aryan mind takes the problems of life with ease ;
 He discriminates *maya* from *satya*, and hence bestirs.
 But he sleeps too, for he often denies the historical ;
 Or, at least, indifferent and inactive he often remains.
 The Mind that guides the destiny of this vast universe,
 Whispers clearly to your conscience and mine.

Give up that you may receive from the High. Sacrifice your "ego"
that you may Self-realise.

Great is this treasure from vulgar mob hidden, withdrawn ;
By the gracious majesty of the star-lit skies now to you revealed.
Be up, my soul, be loyal to this infinite vision ;
Become pure, unsullied, innocent, in uncontaminate purity ;
In Brahmacharya faithfully observed in waking state and in dreams,
In thoughts, words and desires ; in your body, mind and heart.
Purity is the seed of omniscience and omnipotence,
The great magical power by which mortals touch and reach
God's and gods' immortality.

THIS IS MY HEAVEN—LOVE

For days, months and years can I sit in this blessed spot,
Where innocence shines, where my heart, in ecstasy rapt,
Sees vision. For I have seen Thee here, right here,
No reason now is for me to weep any more.
Simple as a dove, pure like a crystal, I become
Candidly white as snow, turned God-ward ;
O make me free and reveal unto me my path,
Which for years long I've sought so earnestly in truth.
Reveal unto me the radiant sunshine of Reality,
Enabling me to see the world in its naked majesty.
Let my sex be sublimated in fruitful service,
In love true, divine and mind-regenerating.
Brahmacharya is health of body and vision of mind,
Strength of heart and ever-renewed God-ward march.
By living faith let me abide in the embrace of God,
Whose will to fulfill is my mission in life.
Let no pseudo-prophets lead me astray,
By removing that subtle border line that exists,
Between self-indulging lust and self-sacrificing love ;
Between simplicity of living faith and scholarly duplicity.
A bachelor's or spinster's single bed is divine,
When Brahmacharya vow is kept unsullied.
By uncontaminate purity even physical ills are cured
Of both body, mind and soul, making you straight, bright,
In this mortal life, my heart cares not what men may say,
Nor fear nor hope for the judgment of history.

Do your duty in this living present with faith,
Leaving the rest into God's guidance and providence.
Brahmacharya, maintained by God's grace and sincere efforts
Is the richest treasure on earth you can ev'r own.
Adults of either sex do not experience the heavenly bliss
Resulting from even a month's chastity truly served.
Spiritual childhood then dawns, vision, wisdom, faith,
As one grows in the path of purity, Brahmacharya unalloyed.
Nothing hurtful can happen to a true Brahmacharin.

Then, before leaving that blessed spot, the poet raised his eyes sky-wards, as once Jesus did in the garden, and said :

ARISE, AWAKE, MY SOUL AND WIN THE PALM OF LIFE

Wake up, my soul, from your long slumber, awake, arise, act.
Affirm life, fulfil your vocation, play your part on this world stage.
Retrace not your daring steps against the onslaughts of adversity ;
Feel not dejected nor despondent, but cast the smile of optimism
Around you that will cheer you up and them who come to you.
Smile, smile, my soul ; sing and dance in this pilgrimage of yours ;
Cast no sighs looking back to your past ; act, my son, with heart
 within, God overhead, act every moment of your life.
Look at the blue skies and let your heart grow and freely breathe ;
Be daring, be on the side of creative enterprize, originality
 and ever-renewed initiative always.
Act, toil hard, achieve, my son, ere you are bidden to part from life.
Act, my son, act, ere your strength fail and youthful energy is gone ;
Arise, awake, act, my soul, arise, awake, son, my daughter, act.
In this struggle for existence, only the fittest will survive ;
Let the fool prate of luck ; every well-born soul must pave
His or her way straight, alone, with patience great ;
For there is no easy-going path to life, love and immortality.
Let your mind be alert, operative, vigilant and reflecting ;
Let your memory work and heart pray always ;
For, until your tiny self is linked with the Universal Self ;
There's no unfading light, no unceasing flow of life through you.
Seek, my soul, and you shall find ; knock my soul,
And the doors of immortality will be opened unto you ;
Ask, my soul, and the path of wisdom will be shown unto you.

Arise, my soul, arise, awake, my heart, awake, win the palm of life
Do your duty day in and day out ; think, watch, pray :
Grumble not, don't demean yourself ; but hold your head erect,
And look at God's spacious sky up above, awake and sing :
"Act, act I will, as long as the divine sun shine before
my heart, my mind and soul".
The sun breaks in the East ; thin, delicate veils as the flowing
saree of a tender virgin are seen up in the firmament ;
Bestir, cheer up, my soul, sing, dance in tune with this Universe,
Whose radiant rays gleam forth in every corner and nook of this
world.
Awake, my soul, awake, sing my soul, sing, and let hearts expand.
Infinite power-house he finds whe knows how to
commune with the Whole.
The little man then becomes a living instrument in the
hands of the Infinite, a God's messenger on earth ;
A power for good, for reawkening the people, for the
good of one's country, for the regeneration Mankind.

AS THE WIND BLOWS

Now my mental sea is calm ; no swelling of the waves is there ;
I set the mast aright and try to sail along.
But alas there is no divine breeze to carry me through ;
I row and row and stay always where I am.
O Pilot of my soul, row me on ; guide me as a loadstar
Through this life's solemn main ; O take me on,
On and on, to the yonder shore of this pilgrimage.
Sit I here lonely and desolate, when all have gone away to work ;
O speak Thou to me words of love and cheer, for Thou art Love.
O Being of my being, Heart of my heart, Soul of my soul,
My Life and Love, Comrade, Beloved and Darling for ever,
Come and steer me straight. Let Thy voice enchant my heart
Enlighten my mind and take me safe along this vale of Death.
O Spirit of this universe, Most Real, Most Beautiful,
Let me find meaning in life through Thee, in Thee, with Thee.
Ere I part from this mortal life may I be blessed
By a kiss of love from Thee. Let Thy loving hands enfold me,
Let thy voice whisper and guide me on through this forest den
And fright of maroons ; on to the never-ending path to immortality.

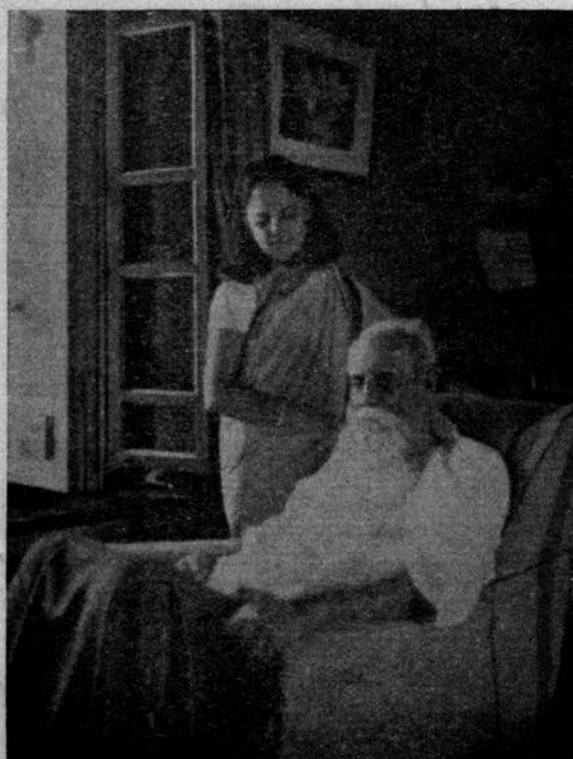
Friend, Comrade, Love, let me in your presence walk,
 Let me think and love in your glorious light,
 Let me serve and sacrifice all along my mortal strife
 And reach Home safe after this journey's end.
 Gales rage around me and I am tossed to and fro.
 This frail barge has sunk many a time.
 It's thy mercy alone that has raised it up
 From the dark abyss of ignorance and death.
 Lead, my Gentle Guide, lead me through this tempestous sea,
 Let my heart of heart be firmly fixed on thee ;
 Let nothing dare to sever me from this destined goal,
 I give you back this mine of mine, my heart and soul.
 As a tall cliff in the midmost ocean wild
 That raises its head above the raging seas,
 Far above the dashing and angry waves,
 So let me keep my heart untainted above maya that swells around,
 To engulf and drown me down, lost, perhaps for ever
 In its grip, in the dungeon pit. But you my Saviour,
 Lead me on through the path of love and knowledge, ever and on.

MAKE ME FREE

Let thy angels toll the bells of thy wedlock ov'r me,
 Let my heart continue to leap in joy and infinite bliss !
 O let all the shackless fall, let my soul soar free
 Upwards, heavenwards. Let my heart's fetters be torn asunder !
 May I be reborn, once for all, in Love Supreme.
 Flesh and blood have no power over me any more ;
 My mind is free, that heart that trobbs within me as well.
 This body of mine I would keep as an unpolluted temple of God,
 Who now reveals to me in the form of Love, Grace and songs.
 Truth and freedom were the only gems my heart pined for,
 Which now have rained from heaven, and I'll weep no more.
 In silence and solitude was a word spoken unto me,
 And I am wedded for ever to my goddess, Freedom, Thee.
 Purity is all that I ask for, O Universal Consciousness within man,
 Take me up from this ditch of malevolence, duplicity and scum
 That tie me down to earth, to mortality, weakness and death,
 Which hold me tied to the wheels of repeated birth and death.



Rabindranath in China



Rabindranath's last photo

Now I gaze at man in care-free ease, with steadiness,
For my mind has found its rest in Thee.
Through that hole I have glimpsed into thy royal chamber,
Where I'll rest for the rest of life, in your lap, in your embrace.
This consciousness "I" is not born of flesh and blood !
No parents it has but Thee, O Supreme Idea, Consciousness
Pure, eternal, immortal. Thee I revere, thee I adore
Who reign supreme in this Infinite Universe, and in the heart
of Man, smaller than the smallest, bigger than the biggest.
Angels of Death will no more sound their bugles at me,
For I am freed. Song of emancipation springs within my heart.
O I am full. I see, I hear, I feel the scenes which no mortal
tongue can describe,
Can destroy, can bestow. O I see infinity. I am freed.
Children with your smiling faces come ;
Ye little babes, with innocent lips continue to sing,
Play and dance in this wonderful Creation of Love.
Keep that child-like innocence which alone is God.
Let duplicity depart ; let my eyes see straight ;
Let them be simple ; and let me gaze fearlessly,
Face to face, at the Great Unknown.
Let me redeem my past ; let me be innocence pure,
And continue to sing that song with ever renewed vigour,
Become one with Nature, in tune with the music of Creation.
Make me free, O Universe, hold me on Freedom's wings,
And let me fly, soar on to the infinite shores of Love, yours and mine !
O Pilot of my soul, cast the moorings of this frail vessel loose,
As before me lies the boundless Ocean of Peace.
Comrade of mine for ever, Love Eternal Divine,
Take me and hold me close, close, close to you.
The polar star sheds its brilliant light along my path
to the Yonder Shore, to Eternity.
Redeemer mine, thy mercy and lovingkindness have ev'r been
The wings for me to soar from this pilgrimage to Unseen Beyond.
Let the bonds of mortality melt away ; let this vast Universe
Fondle me, embrace me, in its arms, in its Love Divine.
May it be given me to stand face to face, as before familiar Love,
Before th' Infinite Mystery, Eternal Silence, the Great Unknown.

THE END

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